

**MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AS ALTERNATIVE ARCHIVAL SPACES: INVESTIGATING  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARCHIVAL PRACTICES IN NON-PROFIT MEDIA  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2014

In the United States, archival institutions have prioritized the preservation of commercial and Hollywood cinema overlooking small-scale media production by non-professionals and independent media artists. Media arts centers, however, have played a pivotal role in the continued access, use, and preservation of materials produced by the communities that they serve. These non-profit media collectives were imagined as a distributed network of organizations supporting the production, exhibition and study of media; serving as information centers about media resources; and supporting regional preservation efforts. However, media arts centers have remained over-looked and unexplored by the archival field. This dissertation seeks to shift this balance, including these artist-run organizations as part of the network of archives and collecting institutions preserving independent media.

Using case study methodologies this study investigated the practices at three media arts centers, Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Paper Tiger Television, and the Termite Television Collective, seeking to understand the role of these organizations in the collection and preservation of independent media and the development of archival practices in non-profit media organizations. The study places each of these organizations in the wider history of media arts center movement in the United States and looks broadly at the development of archives and archival practices within these organizations. Framing media arts centers as maker-spaces and archival spaces, this

dissertation argues for a critique of professional archival practices and a redefinition of the standards for preservation of audiovisual materials.

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## **PREFACE**

This dissertation grew from what was a much smaller question regarding the preservation of a single collection I was charged with caring for during my Master's studies at the University of Pittsburgh School of Information Sciences. I thank Janet Ceja, Richard J. Cox, and Bernadette Callery for seeing the potential in a little project about a film collection at Pittsburgh Filmmakers. I would also like to thank filmmaker George Semsel for inspiring the larger questions that became the dissertation project, and John Cantine and Jessica Futrell for encouraging me to explore my interest in archives during my internship at the Pittsburgh Filmmakers Library.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the growing availability of 16mm film and video technology spurred production from amateur, independent, and underground filmmakers, and a variety of other non-professional media creators. This growing sector of independent media production worked in opposition to Hollywood, the dominant force of media creation. Amateurs have had access to media technology from the advent of cinema, but the availability of a wider variety of formats and the growing number of venues supporting the exhibition of non-commercial and non-professional work grew exponentially during this decade.

This burst of media production influenced the establishment of a network of media arts centers across the country. These centers began as small, non-profit, artists-run organizations, supporting the production of small-scale independent media. The media arts center movement has been generally recognized from those writing from within the movement, but has not been the subject of wider academic study. This dissertation investigates the history and development of several media arts centers focusing on the various services and practices provided by these institutions. In doing so, this dissertation identifies ways in which archival practice may benefit from understanding the relationship of independent media creators to their media products and moving image technology.

## 1.1 THE PRESERVATION OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA

The challenges of preserving independent media in the United States have been identified in a series of reports published by the National Film Preservation Board and Hollywood's major lobbying arm, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. These reports, published decades apart, illustrate many of the challenges that the motion picture industry and moving image archivists share in preserving and providing continual access to audiovisual records.

The Library of Congress published the results of their initial investigation into moving image preservation in 1993. *Film Preservation 1993: A Study of the Current State of Film Preservation* surveyed the growing field of moving image preservation in order to develop a plan for preserving the nation's film heritage. The second report, *Television and Video Preservation 1997* further identified the issues specific to the preservation of videotape formats expanding the preservation plan to include all analog formats of audiovisual media.<sup>1</sup>

More recently, in response to the retooling of the motion picture industry from film to digital video, the Science and Technology Council of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences published their survey of practices at major motion picture studios in 2007, titled *The Digital Dilemma*. This initial report was followed by a second study published in 2012, *The Digital Dilemma 2: Perspectives from Independent Filmmakers, Documentarians, and Nonprofit Audiovisual Archives*, a publication that further investigates the issues specific to media

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<sup>1</sup> Annette Melville and Scott Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993: A Study of the Current State of Film Preservation* (Washington D.C.: National Film Preservation Board, 1993), <http://www.loc.gov/film/study.html>; William Thomas Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation 1997: A Report on the Current State of American Television and Video Preservation* (Washington D.C.: National Film Preservation Board, 1997), <http://www.loc.gov/film/pdfs/tvstudy.pdf>. Reports accessed December 1, 2012.

producers and preservers outside of the major Hollywood studios.<sup>2</sup> Both sets of reports address the preservation of independent media on some scale. However, while these reports suggest that independent media is not being adequately preserved for a variety of reasons, they offer few solutions.

### **1.1.1 Film Preservation 1993 and Television and Video Preservation 1997**

The National Film Preservation Act of 1988 established The National Film Preservation Board, an advisory board for the Librarian of Congress that is charged with developing and implementing the national film preservation plan and selecting “culturally, historically or aesthetically significant films” each year for the National Film Registry.<sup>3</sup> The 1993 and 1997 reports published by the Board coincide with the renewal of the National Film Preservation Act in 1992 and 1996 and were drafted at a moment when moving image archiving was gaining recognition, stimulating more research in the areas of film and video preservation.<sup>4</sup>

Early film preservation efforts were directed toward the collection and preservation of nitrate film, a chemically unstable film stock first used in the production of motion pictures. The volatility of nitrate film and the spotty preservation efforts by film studios shaped early

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<sup>2</sup> Science & Technology Council, *The Digital Dilemma: Strategic Issues in Archiving and Accessing Digital Motion Picture Materials* (Beverly Hills, CA: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2007), <http://www.oscars.org/science-technology/council/projects/digitaldilemma/>; Science & Technology Council, *The Digital Dilemma 2: Perspectives from Independent Filmmakers, Documentarians, and Nonprofit Audiovisual Archives* (Beverly Hills, CA: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2012), <http://www.oscars.org/science-technology/council/projects/digitaldilemma2/index.html>. Reports accessed December 1, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The National Film Preservation Foundation, the funding arm of the National Film Preservation Board was created with the 1996 renewal of the National Film Preservation Act. National Film Preservation Board, “About the Board,” last modified August 31, 2011, <http://www.loc.gov/film/filmabou.html>.

<sup>4</sup> AMIA, the Association of Moving Image Archivists, officially incorporated as the first professional society for moving image archivists in 1991. See also, Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles* (Paris: UNESCO, 2004). (Originally published in 1998).

preservation policies that prioritized the recovery of lost titles from the silent era.<sup>5</sup> Beginning in 1909, acetate based film stock, or “safety film,” was manufactured as an alternative for nitrate film, but nitrate would continue to be used through the early 1950s. “Safety film” became the standard for preservation of nitrate film; older titles were reformatted to new film stock in an attempt to provide continued access to the work.

Similar to nitrate decay, acetate film suffers from “vinegar syndrome,” a progressive deterioration of the film base. Over time, the film stock begins to shrink and warp, eventually inhibiting playback of the medium. Color film also fades over time, leading to additional preservation concerns. After decades of transferring nitrate-based film to acetate stock, by the mid-1990s these preservation issues with acetate film were becoming evident to studios and archives concerned with the preservation of moving images.

*Film Preservation 1993* was a direct response to this new threat to the preservation of motion picture media. Recognizing the disproportionate attention of the preservation community on early cinema, the report suggests, “traditional preservation efforts directed largely toward the Hollywood feature seem shortsighted,” and calls attention to the larger variety of motion pictures deserving of preservation, such as “newsreels, documentaries, experimental or avant-garde films,

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<sup>5</sup> The most frequently cited statistic suggests that some 80% of cinema produced prior to 1928 has been lost. Others estimate that 75% of all silent era footage has been lost along with approximately 50% of all films produced before 1950. See, Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland Classics, 2000), 9.



anthropological and regional films, advertising and corporate shorts, dance documentation, and even amateur home movies, especially of ethnic groups invisible in mainstream media.”<sup>6</sup>

*Film Preservation 1993* also demonstrated the disproportionate allocation of funding among the country’s major film archives. UCLA’s Film and Television Archive, the George Eastman House, and the Museum of Modern Art received 86% of the funds available from the federal government through the American Film Institute and the National Endowment for the Arts from 1979 through 1992.<sup>7</sup> The majority of institutions surveyed for this study were large archival institutions specializing in the preservation of moving image media; however, the report does include a few significant moving image collections held in a number of museums and historical societies across the country.<sup>8</sup>

Independent filmmaking, including avant-garde and documentary film, is recognized as an “at-risk” category of film production in this initial study. While Hollywood studios were beginning to take responsibility for the management of their own moving image assets through the establishment of in-house archives and film libraries, the 1993 report acknowledges the lack of preservation resources among independent producers working outside of these major Hollywood studios. The lack of storage resources for independent filmmakers and the limited distribution of independent productions are both listed as risks to the survival of these works

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<sup>6</sup> Melville and Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993*, chap. 1. This list reflects the types of moving images named by the “orphans” movement. See chapter 2 of this proposal for further discussion. The chart “What Types of Films Are Preserved with AFI-NEA Grants?” demonstrates the disproportionate nature of the funding for film preservation. 53% of funds available through the American Film Institute and National Endowment for the Arts from 1979-1992, funded the preservation of silent era cinema (nitrate titles released before 1929). Independent features received 2% of the available funds with 7% of funding supporting the preservation of avant-garde works. Documentary films received a larger proportion of the funding at 16%, however, it is unclear how films were placed in these categories. Melville and Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993*, fig. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Grants provided through the American Film Institute and the National Endowment for the Arts were the single largest funding source for film preservation at this time. Melville and Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993*, fig. 6.

<sup>8</sup> The National Air & Space Museum, Nebraska Historical Society, Oregon Historical Society, and Bishop Museum Archives in Hawaii were a few of the public respondents reporting collections with over 1,000 moving images. See, Melville and Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993*, fig. 5.

without active intervention by archival institutions.<sup>9</sup> Studio and stock footage libraries, museums and archival institutions, and private collectors are suggested among the disparate sites of preservation for moving image media. However, “independent producers and distributors” becomes a catch-all category, representing a variety of organizations and individuals producing and collecting media.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, media arts centers are specifically named along with other artist-run organizations as sites for collection and distribution of media, but are not pursued further as possible preservers of moving image collections. Film and the major sites of moving image preservation are the central focus of this initial study.

Recognizing the limited focus of the 1993 report, *Preservation 1997* establishes a preservation plan for moving image assets recorded on videotape, including a more extensive discussion related to the preservation of independent media. The report includes all of the “major dimensions” of videotape production, including, “entertainment, nonfiction, news and public affairs, public television, local television news, video art, and independent video.”<sup>11</sup> Videotape and television media are described separately from film-based media due to the preservation concerns specific to magnetic media. Like film-based media, videotape requires specific environmental storage to ensure the long-term preservation of the material. These

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<sup>9</sup> Melville and Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993*, chap. 1.

<sup>10</sup> The definition of “independent” includes everything from large studios working independently of Hollywood studios to individual artists producing and distributing their own work.

<sup>11</sup> Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation 1997*, chap. 1.

moving image formats also degrade over time, resulting in data loss and inhibiting playback.<sup>12</sup> With the larger number of video formats available, issues of obsolescence also put videotape assets at greater risk.<sup>13</sup>

Much like *Film Preservation 1993*, large network studios and archives are described as major preservers of video while media arts centers are mentioned as possible sites of collection, but not included in the larger study. However, unlike *Film Preservation 1993*, independent video and video art are awarded their own chapter in the 1997 report. Again recognizing independent media as an at-risk category, the limited resources of independent media producers are described as the most significant challenge to preserving independent productions. While a few archival institutions are listed among collectors of independent media, non-profit distributors, media arts centers, libraries, community organizations, production units, college audiovisual departments, as well as garages, attics, and closets, are also listed as places where video collections may be found.<sup>14</sup>

*Preservation 1997* shifts the focus beyond preservation also arguing that access to media has inhibited research in this area as “no comprehensive effort has been made to list, catalog or document, let alone preserve this remarkable record of American history and culture.” The report warns, “many media arts groups are unfamiliar with professional cataloging practices and

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<sup>12</sup> The Image Permanence Institute recommends a minimum storage temperature of 54° F at 30-50% relative humidity. See, Jim Wheeler, *Videotape Preservation Handbook* (Jim Wheeler, 2002), <http://www.amianet.org/resources/guides/WheelerVideo.pdf>; Peter Z. Adelstein, *IPI Media Storage Quick Reference*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Rochester, NY: Image Permanence Institute, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Jim Wheeler provides a chart listing threatened, endangered, and obsolescent videotape formats. On a list of twenty-three common formats, only two are listed as being in current use, VHS and S-VHS. Note, this list was published over eight years ago. These once common formats are now being quickly replaced by digital video formats. Wheeler, *Videotape Preservation Handbook*, 22-23.

<sup>14</sup> Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation 1997*, chap. 1, and chap. 5.

lack computers and training facilities, making the development of shared data fairly difficult.”<sup>15</sup> Access becomes central to the conversation of preservation, as the failure to catalog these materials has allowed such collections to remain unrecognized by the preservation community. Funding for the media arts is allocated for the production of media, but few of these small non-profit media organizations have the resources to catalog and preserve their work.<sup>16</sup> Preservation funding is limited to archival institutions, such as the larger moving image repositories cited in the 1993 report, however few of these organizations had prioritized the collection and preservation of video.

Both reports helped to increase awareness of moving image media preservation issues in the United States and shift the preservation focus from nitrate collections to a wider variety of media, including video productions and independent media. In the intervening years, this shift can be traced through the ‘orphan film movement,’ which advocates for the preservation of all forms of media, from art house cinema to home movies.<sup>17</sup> However, as digital production technologies begin to replace the analog, the preservation community has voiced a new set of concerns regarding the preservation of digital media.

### **1.1.2 The Digital Dilemma: 2007 and 2012**

The first *Digital Dilemma* report, published in 2007, focuses on the digital asset management issues of major Hollywood studios as they transition from analog to digital

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<sup>15</sup> Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation* 1997, chap. 5.

<sup>16</sup> The 1997 report cites a Media Alliance grant application seeking funds to catalog video art that was twice rejected by the National Endowment for the Arts. The report also suggests that *none* of the media arts organizations have funding to preserve the media they create. Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation* 1997, chap. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Further discussion of orphan films may be found in Chapter 2.

production. The retooling of the motion picture industry poses a number of challenges for studios managing their moving image assets. As *Film Preservation 1993* illustrated, by the mid-1990s studios had developed internal archives programs to manage the media they produced; the retooling of the production process for new digital media formats also suggests a retooling for these preservation programs.

No longer bound by the cost of celluloid film, the low cost of memory and storage space affords media producers with opportunities to capture more moving image material during production than analog counterparts.<sup>18</sup> Along with this increase in the amount of data produced, the entire production workflow shifts as the digital files, rather than analog film, are manipulated, transferred, and stored on a number of servers and machines. Digital formats have now matched, and in some instances surpassed, the pictorial quality of film, but do not produce a physical element – the standard on which moving image preservation has been defined.

While production and distribution are streamlined, eliminating the need to strike multiple analog prints of each film, preservation and long-term storage now present a greater financial liability for studios. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences estimates an annual cost of \$1,059 to store an analog archival master of a single title. The management and storage of a 4K digital master (the digital equivalent of an analog print) is estimated at \$12,514 per year.<sup>19</sup> Unlike physical film elements that can be passively housed in cold storage for centuries, digital files require active management to ensure preservation into the future.

*The Digital Dilemma* compares the information produced in the major motion picture industry to the “big data” issues challenging the medical, earth science, government, corporate

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<sup>18</sup> For further discussion of the transition from analog to digital and the impact on archival practice, see Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Science & Technology Council. *The Digital Dilemma*, 1-2.

business, and supercomputing sectors. The report recognizes that every sector is encountering the same digital preservation challenges and that there is no single cost-effective, long-term, digital preservation strategy that can be universally adopted in all situations.<sup>20</sup>

Concerned with the assets of the larger motion picture industry, this report focuses on the efforts of the corporate realm to preserve their assets, surveying the digital asset management systems of large oil companies and large sectors of the United States government such as the National Archives and Department of Defense. While the conclusions regarding digital storage requirements and preservation strategies are universal to all types of digital management, the reports fail to address the smaller scale solutions for organizations that do not have the resources for this large-scale digital management. Like *Film Preservation 1993*, the concerns of the commercial film industry for the long-term management of commercial moving image assets are prioritized in this report. This study upholds the unequal balance between the concerns of the larger motion picture industry and small-scale production, seeking large scale solutions rather than looking towards smaller institutions for possible insight.

These shortcomings were addressed in a second report, *The Digital Dilemma 2: Perspective from Independent Filmmakers, Documentarians and Nonprofit Audiovisual Archives*, published in early 2012. Partnering with the Library of Congress's National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP), the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences conducted a survey of independent filmmakers, producers, and distributors

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<sup>20</sup> Science & Technology Council, *The Digital Dilemma*, 1.

between 2008 and 2011 to examine the preservation practices and concerns of both independent media producers and non-profit archives.<sup>21</sup>

The report suggests that of the 550 public moving image archives in the United States and 310 moving image archives world-wide, none of these archives were cited as final repositories for the independent media, with two exceptions: the UCLA Film and Television Archive which works in partnership with the Sundance Institute and Outfest, two large exhibition spaces for independent cinema.<sup>22</sup> Instead, other non-profit audiovisual archives are listed as repositories of last resort, that is, if the work of independent filmmakers' survives to donation.

Most independent filmmakers in this study reported that their major concerns were distribution of their work and managing upcoming projects; preservation was thought to be a concern for producers, production companies, and distributors, rather than the individual filmmakers.<sup>23</sup> About half of those interviewed reported that they "sometimes" think about long-term preservation, and 8% reported they do not even consider the short-term preservation of their work.<sup>24</sup> While the technological challenges to the preservation of independent media are the same as they are for larger commercial productions, these media creators do not operate in the same networks and have the same resources available to them.

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<sup>21</sup> The full list of participants is not yet available but will be published on the AMPAS website at sometime in the future. The case studies developed from the report include a number of archives including the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University, The Film and Media Archive at Washington University, the Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection at the University of Georgia, and one non-archival non-profit media institution, Franklin Furnace in Brooklyn, New York.

<sup>22</sup> The Science and Technology Council, *The Digital Dilemma* 2, 36.

Much like *Film Preservation 1993*, "independent" in this report suggests "indie" films as defined by the indie film movement in the 1990s. "Indie" films produced outside of the major Hollywood studios, but still represent large productions. *No Country for Old Men*, *Crash*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *The Hurt Locker*, and *The King's Speech* are all cited as "indie" productions recently recognized by the Academy Awards. *Preservation 1997* remains the unique outlier among these reports, specifically mentioning "community media" and other smaller independent media productions.

<sup>23</sup> The Science and Technology Council, *The Digital Dilemma* 2, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Long-term was defined as longer than 20 years.

Shared responsibility or a cooperative structure was suggested as one possible method for systematically collecting and preserving independent media. *Preservation 1997* reached a similar conclusion, suggesting that shared responsibility of archival resources would better support the distributed nature of the independent film sector. The independent filmmakers surveyed for this study favored this distributed preservation model, but the possibilities of partnering with media arts centers as part of a preservation network was not explored; the report does not look beyond recognized archives as possible sites of preservation for independent film.<sup>25</sup>

Taken as a set, these four studies illustrate the challenges of moving image archiving, suggest a need for preservation education for moving image professionals and moving image creators, and identify a need for greater financial support for the preservation of media in both analog and digital formats. These studies also demonstrate the issues of technological obsolescence that plagues the preservation community. The moving image industry is constantly evolving, affording moving image producers with the ability to innovate and communicate in new ways. Archivists are faced with the challenge of providing continued access and managing these records into the future. The loss of moving image materials, whether through purposeful destruction or due to the ephemeral nature of the physical media, has shaped the field of moving image archiving. However, these reports do not look beyond the traditional types of institutions responsible for the creation and preservation of moving images. Preservation, as defined by large studios and moving image archives, remains the central tenet of these reports. While the need for small-scale solutions is acknowledged, there is no attempt by

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<sup>25</sup> The report does recognize collections maintained outside of large moving image archives. Collections are described at The Country Music Hall of Fame, the Hoover Institution, the Human Studies Film Archives of the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Northeast Historic Film, and Anthology Film Archives.



any of these studies to look beyond traditional venues of moving image collection and preservation to understand the role of organizations outside of the studios, such as media arts centers.

## **1.2 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AND THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKING COMMUNITY**

Media arts centers were initially conceived as a network of organizations developed to provide resources supporting independent media production. Sheldon Renan, former director of the Pacific Film Archives, suggested this grassroots movement was initiated in 1969 in direct response to the failure of the American Film Institute to establish “regional full-service film centers” supporting the Institute’s national focus.<sup>26</sup> Renan imagined a distributed network of film centers across the United States, serving, “film audiences; filmmakers; scholars from any discipline needing to do research with film; teachers; industry (where the public good is somehow involved); and public television.”<sup>27</sup> Each would support the production, exhibition and study of media; serve as information centers about media resources; and work with the Library of Congress to support regional preservation efforts.

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<sup>26</sup> Sheldon Renan, “The Concept of Regional Film Centers,” *Sightlines* 7, no. 3 (1973/1974): 7. Instead, the American Film Institute (AFI) would support filmmaking on the national level. AFI served as a lobbyist for film preservation, prioritizing the loss of Hollywood cinema discussed in *Film Preservation 1993*. The AFI’s policies and funding priorities also helped to define film preservation in this country and the goals of film preservation efforts, which focused on Hollywood as the cultural heritage of the nation. See also, Janna Jones, *The Past is A Moving Picture: Preserving the Twentieth Century on Film* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida), 61-74.

<sup>27</sup> Renan, “The Concept of Regional Film Centers”, 7.

Embracing Renan's desires, a community of filmmakers and supporters of the media arts organized a series of conferences in mid-1970s, providing a venue for independent filmmakers to express their concerns regarding the development and support of independent media production in the United States. *The Independent Film Community* was drafted at one of these conferences, the Conference on the Regional Development of Film Centers and Services (or the "Mohonk Conference"), organized by the Committee on Film and Television Resources and submitted to the National Endowment for the Arts.<sup>28</sup> This initial conference was followed by a series of eleven regional conferences, the "Major Media Center Conferences," to review and approve the final report that identified the needs of the independent film community in the United States.<sup>29</sup> The final report identifies five areas of concern for the independent filmmakers: distribution, funding, non-theatrical exhibition, film study, and preservation. Media literacy and education are also named as high priorities for this growing community of media producers.<sup>30</sup>

Many of the conclusions in this report foreshadow the conclusions reached in the studies published by National Film Preservation Board and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. *The Independent Filmmaking Community* argues that independent filmmaking networks are widely distributed and distinct from traditional production and have few resources to support the production of media. The authors call upon the federal government to prioritize funding for independent media in order to allow for democratic access to media resources and to

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<sup>28</sup> The authors of the report chose the term "community" to describe independent filmmaking over "industry" due to the distributed nature of independent film production and to contrast this network of filmmakers with the Hollywood film industry. Peter Feinstein, ed., *The Independent Film Community* (New York: Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services, 1977), v.

<sup>29</sup> Pittsburgh Filmmakers hosted the first of these conferences in 1978 with the Carnegie Institute (the Carnegie Museum of Art). Other sites for regional conferences included the American Film Institute, Pacific Film Archive, Rocky Mountain Film Center, the Walker Art Center, and WGBH-TV Boston. This series of conferences was just one of the many that would lead to the development of NAMAC, the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, first known as the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers. See, Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*, 97.

<sup>30</sup> Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*, 85-95.

support the development of a larger network of resources for this growing community. Interestingly, along with access to the tools of media production, preservation is also named as one of the top priorities.<sup>31</sup> While the fragility of the medium is cited as one of the primary concerns regarding the longevity of film and video media, the report suggests that “avantgarde filmmakers need to be educated about the realities of preservation,” and further that the economics of independent filmmaking and the lack of a systematic method for collecting such works were also growing concerns for preserving the material for posterity.<sup>32</sup>

*Film Preservation 1993* specifically mentions media centers as sites storing the work of independent filmmakers. *The Digital Dilemma 2* also mentions the role of media cooperatives and artist-run organizations emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s in preserving the works of independent artists, but does not specifically address media arts centers. As a network, media arts centers fulfill all of these functions: funding, preservation, distribution, exhibition, and study.<sup>33</sup> Drafted by the preservation community, the reports published by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the National Film Preservation Board focus solely on preservation, only one of the many services provided by media arts centers. As a result, these sites are passed-over and not explored. This dissertation seeks to shift this balance, including these artist-run organizations as part of the network of archives and collecting institutions preserving independent media.

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<sup>31</sup> In his 1978 review of the regional conference Robert Haller, then director of Pittsburgh Filmmakers, places preservation at the top of the list of topics addressed above other technological issues, including: publication and scholarship, exhibition and distribution, and advocacy. Robert A. Haller, “The Pittsburgh Regional and Major Media Conference,” *Field of Vision* 4 (Fall 1978): 23.

<sup>32</sup> Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*, 70-71.

<sup>33</sup> See, J. Ronald Green, “Film and Not-for-Profit Media Institutions,” in *Film/Culture Explorations of Cinema in its Social Context*, ed. Sari Thomas (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 45.

### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What can the history and development of three differing media arts centers – Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Paper Tiger Television, and Termite Television Collective – reveal about the role of media arts centers in the collection and preservation of independent media and the development of archival practices in non-profit media organizations?
2. How can the identified practices impact the future management of media collections in archival organizations?

### 1.4 WHAT ARE MEDIA ARTS CENTERS?

*Media arts centers* are non-profit entities that often operate under a membership or cooperative model supporting media creators who are producing media outside of commercial production outlets such as television and film studios. The centers promote access to media technology, provide educational opportunities for artists and non-specialists, and serve as an outlet for the circulation and dissemination of these materials. As this study investigates the development of these media organizations as part of a distinct movement, the term will serve as a designator referring specifically to institutions that are organizational members of the National Association of Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) that support the production, preservation, distribution, exhibition, and study of media.

*Media arts* refers to all media products, either digital or analog, created using film or video media. This term includes “art that is produced using or combining film, video, and computers,” and “a diverse array of artistic work that includes narrative, documentary, and

experimental films; videos and digital products; and installation art using media.”<sup>34</sup> For the purposes of this study, this distinction is important. The moving image preservation movement in the United States has been defined by the preservation of the film object, pushing these broader types of media products to the margins of the field. By encompassing all moving image media, analog and digital, this term places less emphasis on the specific technologies (film or video) used to produce individual media products and provides a means for generally describing the issues faced in the management of audiovisual materials.

*Independent* typically delineates media produced outside of mainstream media outlets. The term is typically associated with “indie” films (a term coined during the boom of independent cinema in the 1990s), which designates films produced in studios outside of mainstream Hollywood; however, “indie” studios and production houses can represent media conglomerates as large as their Hollywood counterparts.<sup>35</sup>

Film critics and scholars have also defined independent media according to their aesthetics, suggesting that independent productions prescribe to certain visual and thematic codes.<sup>36</sup> However, the term originates to the underground film movement of the 1960s. Sheldon Renan, founder of the Pacific Film Archive, combines both the aesthetic and economic definitions, suggesting that an underground film is “personal statement” that “dissents radically in form, or in technique, or in content, or perhaps in all three.” Such films are produced with

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<sup>34</sup> Kevin F. McCarthy and Elizabeth Heneghan Ondaatje, *From Celluloid to Cyberspace: The Media Arts and the Changing Arts World* (Pittsburgh: RAND, 2002), vii.

<sup>35</sup> George Lucas’s Lucasfilms and the Weinstein’s Miramax Films are examples of these large independent studios associated with “indie” productions.

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Yannis Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Emanuel Levy, *Cinema of Outsiders: The Rise of Independent Film* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

minimal financial resources and are distributed outside of the mainstream commercial outlets.<sup>37</sup>

The term also suggests that the individual creator maintains ownership and complete creative control over the work.<sup>38</sup>

This study will use the definition proposed by the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC):

video and film conceived and produced independently of the traditional corporate sponsors for media and made for a wide range of purposes beyond purely commercial considerations. The work may be personal essays, documentaries, media or video art, feature-style narratives, or combinations of them.<sup>39</sup>

This definition not only includes a variety of recognized modes of production, but also encompasses other types of non-commercial media, including alternative, radical, and community media. Media arts centers serve what can be described as “independent media artists,” filmmakers and video creators working outside the realm of traditional sites of production such as film and television studios that maintain creative and intellectual control over their works. The broad range of services provided by media arts centers allow these independent media producers to maintain this control over the works they create.

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<sup>37</sup> Sheldon Renan, *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1967), 17.

<sup>38</sup> In her study of the preservation of independent media in Canada Michele L. Wozny suggests, “Independent refers to audiovisual work over which the producer not only maintains complete creative and editorial control during the production, but also post-production copyright ownership.” See, Michele L. Wozny, “National Audiovisual Preservation Initiatives and the Independent Media Arts in Canada,” *Archivaria* 67 (Spring 2009): 88.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Blau, *Deep Focus: A Report on the Future of Independent Media* (San Francisco: National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, 2004), 1.

## **1.5 SITES OF STUDY**

Three media arts centers have been identified as the subjects of this study. These centers are non-profit, membership driven organizations that support the production, distribution, and preservation of media. The similarities among the functions of each institution provide points of comparison, while the age of each organization and the media production technologies available at the time of their incorporation provide areas of contrast.

By selecting cases that have been established over the last forty years, these centers represent a diversity of organizational structures, programming, support functions, and technological concerns. Each of these organizations has recently celebrated an anniversary of their founding and has been established long enough to begin to look at their practices through a historical lens. Through studying this series of media centers established over successive decades, the project can help to demonstrate how these organizations have grown and adapted to successive changes in media technology while also providing a broader historical overview of the media arts movement in this country.

### 1.5.1 Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Inc.

*Pittsburgh Filmmakers (est. 1971) is a nonprofit corporation designed to encourage the creation and understanding of media for noncommercial artistic and literary purposes. To this end, Filmmakers offers a curriculum of courses in film, video, and photography to university and independent students in the Pittsburgh region. Filmmakers also exhibits the work of prominent photographers and filmmakers in its two galleries, Melwood Screening Room, Regent Square Theater and Harris Theater. A key component of Filmmakers' mission is to provide equipment access and funding for independent media artists.*<sup>40</sup>

Former director of Pittsburgh Filmmakers Robert Haller described Pittsburgh as the “third city” of independent filmmaking during the 1970s.<sup>41</sup> Established in 1971, Pittsburgh Filmmakers began as a filmmakers’ co-op providing access to equipment for local filmmakers and exhibition space for visiting artists, while serving as a hub for independent film production outside of the filmmaking centers of San Francisco and New York City. Haller suggests that a combination of “institutional, geographic, financial, and personal factors were responsible for making the city a catalyst and a player in the national and international community of what had earlier been called experimental or underground film.”<sup>42</sup> While the media arts center played an important role in the local and national film community, Pittsburgh Filmmakers also emerged as a pivotal player in the emerging media arts center movement.<sup>43</sup>

Now in its forty-first year, Pittsburgh Filmmakers manages the operation of three theaters, offers for-credit and non-credit courses in media production, and continues to provide

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<sup>40</sup> Pittsburgh Filmmakers, “About Us,” last modified July 24, 2007, <http://www.pghfilmmakers.org/about/index.html>. Accessed April 2, 2014 through the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine, <http://archive.org/web/>.

<sup>41</sup> Robert A. Haller, *Crossroads: Avant-garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Haller, *Crossroads*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> The first of the Major Media Center Conferences held to review *The Independent Film Community* was co-hosted by Pittsburgh Filmmakers and the Carnegie Institute in 1978. See, note 29.



access to film and video equipment and gallery space for members and local artists. Established in the early 2000s, the Pittsburgh Filmmakers Library supports film and media research with a highly specialized collection of monographs, journals, videos, and other media resources. While the organization does not have a formal archives program, Pittsburgh Filmmakers also serves as custodian of two significant archival film collections including 30,000 feet of footage from *Pittsburgh*, a film commissioned for the city's bicentennial in 1958, and the films of underground filmmaker, George Semsel.<sup>44</sup>

Both collections have found their way to Pittsburgh Filmmakers almost by accident. *Pittsburgh* was ultimately deemed a failure by the bicentennial committee that commissioned the production of the film in 1959. For decades, twenty drums of original camera negatives, trims, work-prints, and outtakes were transferred between several storage locations, only to be donated to Pittsburgh Filmmakers in 1979 before the annual Three Rivers Film Festival.<sup>45</sup> A video transfer of the film was created and screened at the festival, drawing renewed interest in the film. Since this transfer of custody in 1979, the film and original elements have been stored at Pittsburgh Filmmakers, even though the organization does not have an official archives program and does not have the facilities to provide proper storage for the film elements according to

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<sup>44</sup> *Pittsburgh* is listed in Rick Prelinger's *Field Guide to Sponsored Films*, a catalog of "historically significant, but neglected titles," compiled in 2006 with the support of the National Film Preservation Foundation. See, Rick Prelinger, *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006), 74. For a history of the film see, Sean P. Kilcoyne, "Pittsburgh (1959): 'Equilibriums of Paradox' and the Bicentennial City of Tomorrow," *Moving Image* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 70-94.

<sup>45</sup> The film materials were originally stored in a New York city warehouse, then at the Selma Burke Arts Center in Pittsburgh, and finally in the garage of Ted Hazlett, former president of the A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust. The Bicentennial Association retained custody of a 16mm print of the completed film until it disbanded in 1960. This print was also placed in Hazlett's custody. See, Ed Blank, "Festival Screens \$150,000 Curiosity," *Pittsburgh Press* (June 10, 1979).

archival standards.<sup>46</sup> Pittsburgh Filmmakers received funding to transfer the film to digital video as part of the city's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. The film was re-screened as the *Pittsburgh Reframed (at 250)* that included a series of two minute and fifty second shorts created by several Pittsburgh artists that included some aspect of the original footage from *Pittsburgh*.<sup>47</sup>

In 2003 filmmaker George Semsel, Professor Emeritus in the School of Film at Ohio State University, donated his collection of 16mm films to Pittsburgh Filmmakers. This collection represents his work from the early 1960s through the late 1990s. In a 2009 interview, Dr. Semsel expressed his reasons for donating the collection to Pittsburgh Filmmakers, explaining that the work of the filmmakers he associated with has been lost and that the current network of archival institutions has insufficiently documented independent filmmaking. His hope was that his donation would inspire Pittsburgh Filmmakers to develop an archival program to support a larger documentation effort within the independent filmmaking community.<sup>48</sup>

While these collections have not inspired the creation of an official archives program, Pittsburgh Filmmakers is serving as an archive of last resort and as such is performing a preservation function for the community of filmmakers that the organization supports. The organization's interest in the entire life-cycle of media, its involvement in the foundations of the media arts center movement, and its continued operation under the traditional media arts center model have made Pittsburgh Filmmakers an ideal subject for this study.

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<sup>46</sup> In 1979 the film was already beginning to show signs of physical decay. The *Pittsburgh Press* article states, "because its color has faded with age, the movie looks as if it has been filmed through a red filter." The elements are currently stored at room temperature at the Pittsburgh Filmmakers facilities. The ISO recommendation for the storage of film elements exhibiting these signs of deterioration is 32°F at 30 to 50% relative humidity. See, Adelstein, *IPI Media Storage Quick Reference*.

<sup>47</sup> A press release relaying the history of *Pittsburgh* and the *Reframed* project can be found at <http://pittsburgh250film.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>48</sup> George Semsel, interview with the author, July 19, 2009.

### 1.5.2 Paper Tiger Television Collective

*Paper Tiger Television (PTTV) is an open, non-profit, volunteer video collective. Through the production and distribution of our public access series, media literacy/video production workshops, community screenings and grassroots advocacy PTTV works to challenge and expose the corporate control of mainstream media. PTTV believes that increasing public awareness of the negative influence of mass media and involving people in the process of making media is mandatory for our long-term goal of information equity.*<sup>49</sup>

Paper Tiger Television (PTTV) has its roots in the public access television movement. The collective was founded in 1981 as a live public access television program produced by a small number of dedicated volunteers. Each week the show offered a critical reading of a specific publication such as the *U.S. News and World Report*, using media to critique media. One of the original “tigers,” DeeDee Hallek explains the media literacy aims of the programming, “by going over a publication in detail,” she suggests, and “by examining how it is enmeshed in the transnational corporate world and by pointing out exactly how and why certain information appears, a good critical reading can invert the media so that they work against themselves.”<sup>50</sup> PTTV’s programming has expanded beyond this weekly critique to a variety of alternative programming broadcast on public access channels in Manhattan and Brooklyn, available through video distribution channels, and published on the Internet.

The non-profit media collective produces and distributes media and serves as a grassroots community advocate, working in opposition to mainstream media. The collective “believes that increasing public awareness of the negative influence of mass media and involving people in the

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<sup>49</sup> Paper Tiger Television, “Mission”, accessed April 1, 2014, <http://papertiger.org/mission>.

<sup>50</sup> DeeDee Hallek, “Paper Tiger Television: Smashing the Myths of the Information Industry Every Week on Public Access Cable,” in *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 117.

process of making media is mandatory for our long-term goal of information equity” and supports a number of community programming initiatives that focus on media education and literacy.<sup>51</sup>

The collective also maintains a significant archives that supports the production and distribution of PTTV media. Included in *Footage 89*, a catalog of media holdings from a variety of moving image repositories in North America, PTTV is described as a videotape archives and distributor.<sup>52</sup> The 1989 publication lists a collection of 150 videotapes produced by the media center. These include ¾-inch videotape masters and VHS viewing copies that are available to the public by appointment. *Footage 89* also suggests that the organization has intellectual control of its holdings with a card catalog, published catalog, and a computer catalog for staff use.<sup>53</sup> PTTV currently maintains a collection of over 330 titles spanning the entire history of the organization. A smaller collection of videos are also available online.

In 2010, PPTV donated its archive, including the master videotapes from thirty years of production to the Fales Library & Special Collections at New York University. As the master videotapes donated to Fales have not been processed and remain inaccessible, PTTV continues to list the “archives project” among a number of other media projects currently being undertaken by the collective. The project includes the preservation of the duplicate videotapes of PTTV’s

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<sup>51</sup> Paper Tiger Television, “Mission,” [http://papertiger.org/mission\\_](http://papertiger.org/mission_)

<sup>52</sup> The catalog was compiled with the assistance of Rick Prelinger, a collector and advocate for industrial film preservation. The 1989 publication and 1991 supplement were an attempt to create a union catalog of moving image holdings in a variety of repositories across North America. Any institution and organization collecting moving images were considered for the study, not just those serving as recognized moving image archives. By 1991, when the updated supplement was published, PTTV’s archives had grown to almost 200 titles and over 400 individual videotapes. See, Richard Prelinger and Celeste R. Hoffnar, eds., *Footage 89: North American Film and Video Sources* (New York: Prelinger Associates, 1989); Richard Prelinger, ed., *Footage 91: North American Film and Video Sources* (New York: Prelinger Associates, 1991).

<sup>53</sup> Prelinger and Hoffnar, *Footage 89*, 398. A smaller collection of PTTV’s productions are also listed as available through the Video Data Bank, a well recognized video archives and distributor. See, Prelinger and Hoffnar, *Footage 89*, 222.

programming which remain in their offices, as well as related documentation, artifacts, and ephemera. This project aims to organize, physically preserve, and catalog the materials related to these collections. The archives “reflect the work of many prominent media scholars, activists, cultural critics, and artists of the last 25 years, but also that of activists from social justice movements whose struggle might otherwise have gone undocumented.” PTTV understands this project as an important step in not only documenting the history of the organizations, but also the larger history of the public access television movement, video art, media advocacy, visual literacy initiatives, and video activism.<sup>54</sup>

Much like Pittsburgh Filmmakers, PTTV provides a variety of services related to the production, distribution, and preservation of media. With its focus on media activism and broadcast television, rather than the production of media as individual artistic products, PTTV provides another perspective on the development of media arts centers.

### 1.5.3 Termite Television Collective

*a living manifesto: Truth is invented and not discovered.; Every text has a context.; Video is not a medium, but an event.; The observer is part of the experiment.; Media is a controlled substance.; Meaning is an act of imagination.; Fiction is the line which connects two facts.; Facts are past participles, fictions are verbs.; A dogma is a frozen belief.; Faith is a dialogue between the soul and the self.; A revolution is above all a revolution of thought.; Today television, tomorrow the world.; Idleness is the holiday of fools.*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Paper Tiger Television, “Current Projects,” accessed December 18, 2013, <http://papertiger.org/current>. The project is currently described as being in the “assessment stage.” PTTV is also advertising a volunteer, internship position for a video archivist that would “manage the preservation” of the collection, including identifying, cataloging, and digitizing materials in the collection. See, Paper Tiger Television, “Get Involved: Intern,” <http://papertiger.org/intern>.

<sup>55</sup> Termite Television Collection, “About,” accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.termite.org/info/description.html>.

The youngest of the three media arts centers selected for this study, the Termite Television Collective (Termite TV) was founded in 1992 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by a small group of MFA students from Temple University that shared a desire to use television as a medium to critique mainstream media productions. The collective began with a weekly half-hour timeslot on Drexel University's television station DUTV, and has continued to provide media programming through public access television and online through the collective's website over the last twenty years.<sup>56</sup> Similar to Paper Tiger Television, the mission of Termite TV is "to produce, distribute and facilitate the creation of experimental and activist media that challenges the status quo and provides an alternative to corporate media."<sup>57</sup> The collective's name was inspired by a quote from film critic Manny Farber who observed, "a peculiar fact about termite-tapeworm-fungus-moss art is that it goes always forward eating its own boundaries, and likely as not, leaves nothing in its path other than the signs of eager, industrious, unkempt activity."<sup>58</sup> Like Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the organization also hosts a variety of educational initiatives including a partnership with Temple University's MFA program and a series of community media literacy workshops.<sup>59</sup> However, unlike the other two media centers selected for this study, the majority of Termite TV's work is broadcast electronically on the organization's website.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Leann Erickson, "Boundaries and Beyond: The Termite TV Collective," *Afterimage* 28 (May/June 2001): 5.

<sup>57</sup> Termite Television Collective, "About," accessed December 18, 2013, <http://www.termite.org/about.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Manny Farber, "White Elephant Art Vs. Termite Art," in *Negative Space: Manny Farber on the Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 135.

<sup>59</sup> The community initiative, "Messages in Motion," partners with a variety of community groups providing instruction on media production. Participants create short "video postcards" to educate others about social issues in their communities. The workshops are conducted on-site at a variety of community centers. Termite TV provides instructors and media technology in a blue van that travels from community to community much like a bookmobile combining community media, social activism, and media literacy from a single source. See, Termite Television Collective, "Messages in Motion: About," <http://messagesinmotion.com/about/>.

<sup>60</sup> Anula Shetty, co-director of Termite TV, describes the organization as a "media collective" suggesting a shift from television broadcast media.

Similar to Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the collective does not have an official archives program. Instead, the organization understands their website as a “self-archiving” effort.<sup>61</sup> Over 40 programs dating from 1992 to present are currently available through [termite.org](http://termite.org).<sup>62</sup> In addition to broadcasting online, the collective produces a variety of media programs broadcasted nationally through public television networks and included in festival and museum screenings. Several ongoing projects illustrate the services offered by the collective and the organization’s attempts to provide continued access to their media productions.

“Life Stories,” a project aimed at curating and “ever-growing collection” of 5-minute life stories, began as the “Living Documentary” project, a cross-country bus trip with Termite TV members collaborating with local media artists and residents to produce a constantly evolving documentary of life across the United States. Originally broadcast as part of the collective’s regular programming, the project has now expanded into a digital database of videos.<sup>63</sup> While the database is still in the early stages of development, the videos can be accessed chronologically through a series of thumbnail images or through text-based links that include transcriptions of the videos. Eventually the videos will also be geographically organized through a Google Maps tool.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the geographic representation of the collection, the collective also desires to build a function that allows anyone to upload a 5-minute life story. The “Life Stories” project represents just one attempt by the collective to create, collect, and provide continued access to the work created by Termite TV.

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<sup>61</sup> Anula Shetty, conversation with the author, AMIA/IASA Conference, Philadelphia, PA., November 4, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Termite Television Collective, “About,” <http://www.termite.org/about.html>.

<sup>63</sup> The collective eventually hopes to provide a means for anyone to upload their 5-minute stories to the website. At present only the curated collection of videos is available.

<sup>64</sup> Individual videos are linked to their coordinates on Google Maps, but eventually a Google Map visualization representing the location of all of the project videos will be available. Termite Television Collective, “Life Stories,” <http://termite.org/lifestories/>.

“Walk Philly,” an interactive video walking tour of Philadelphia, includes historical and archival material as well as artist generated videos, representing a different type of archival involvement by the collective. Described as a “walking museum,” video tours are led by local artists, historians, performers, and other community members, providing “a personal interpretation evoking histories, moods and memories.”<sup>65</sup> The multi-media productions can be downloaded to a variety of portable devices including smartphones and iPods. These immersive tours juxtapose images and sounds from the past with the present landscape as tourists move through city. Both documenting and historicizing Philadelphia, this project represents a participatory, location-based archive of sorts – part documentary, part oral history, and part community archive.

Termite TV rounds out the cases selected for this study representing the most recent decades of the media arts center movement. While sharing similarities with Paper Tiger Television, which may be indicative of what media arts centers have become, the collective’s educational and media literacy initiatives provide points of comparison with Pittsburgh Filmmakers. The collective’s desire to build an online archive of materials presents additional points of contrast with the physical archives (both formal and informal) established by the other two organizations.

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<sup>65</sup> Termite Television Collective, “Walk Philly: About,” <http://termite.org/walkphilly/about/>.



## 1.6 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AS MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Independent media presents specific challenges for archivists. Moving image creators do not see a responsibility to preserve their work, but they also express a desire to have their work preserved. These concerns have been expressed in a series of reports generated by the producers and preservers of media over the past thirty-five years. The discussion of independent video art in *Preservation 1997* concludes:

The needs of the independent media arts community merit an on-going task force devoted to preservation and access issues, a task force linking the expertise of local groups with that of nationally recognized centers for video preservation. One place to begin is to conduct a nationwide survey to determine where and how these collections are stored and whether collaborative strategies are possible. In addition it is necessary to conserve, catalog, and bring these works to the attention of a wider public and to scholars and educators.<sup>66</sup>

In the fifteen years since the publication of this report, no such taskforce has been assembled, and the expertise of local groups such as media arts centers have not been explored. This study represents one step towards recognizing the efforts of media arts centers in the preservation of media and to further explore how they manage their assets.

As organizations that support a full range of activities related to the production and distribution of media, media arts centers are a missed opportunity for archivists. Through studying the way in which these media centers collect and preserve, represent and provide access to their collections, and support the production of media through training media creators, this

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<sup>66</sup> Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation 1997*, chap. 5.

project aims to uncover opportunities for archivists and archival practice to learn from the ways in which these centers have adapted to changing technologies over-time and managed their media collections.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The moving image archives literature has acknowledged the challenges of preserving media produced outside of mainstream commercial venues, as evidenced in the reports from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the National Film Preservation Board. Media arts centers are one of many sites in which independent media is created, accessed, and collected, but as these centers prioritize the production of media material, they have not been recognized by the archival community as sites of collection and preservation. More significantly, while the ‘media arts movement’ has been generally recognized by those working within the movement, little scholarship directly addresses the development of the organizations that emerged from this movement. With their concern for media education, production, distribution, exhibition, and collection, media arts centers can be placed at the intersections of several related areas of scholarship, which provide some context for understanding these non-profit media organizations.

### **2.1 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

While reports such as *The Independent Filmmaking Community* provide a glimpse into the ambitions of the media arts center movement, little academic writing has focused on the nature and development of these media organizations. Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, avant-garde and underground filmmakers are cited as the first independent media artists. Video and

television supported the following decades of media creation, while digital technologies and new media dominate the most recent wave of media production.<sup>67</sup> The development of media technology has no doubt influenced the context of production, however the literature follows a technologically deterministic narrative rather than exploring the other influences on media production such as the organization structures that supported it.

In a 2002 report describing the impact of digital process on the media arts sector, the literature related to the media arts is described as “more likely to focus on individual media arts disciplines, such as documentaries or Internet art, than on the media arts as a distinctive genre,” while “emphasizing the artistic and aesthetic aspects of the media arts rather than their organizational characteristics.”<sup>68</sup> P. Adams Sitney’s seminal work on the American avant-garde *Visionary Film*, exemplifies this literature. Focusing specifically on film as a medium, Sitney’s historical work highlights individual filmmakers providing a close reading of specific films as examples of the avant-garde genre as it developed in the United States.<sup>69</sup> Volumes dedicated to experimental, documentary, and underground film similarly describe the aesthetic conventions of these different modes of production while describing each film as the personal product of a single artist, rather than addressing the network of organizations that filmmakers relied on for equipment, distribution, and funding.<sup>70</sup> This focus on the individual artist is common across the

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<sup>67</sup> This lineage of technology is traced in McCarthy and Ondaatje, *From Celluloid to Cyberspace*, 26-28.

<sup>68</sup> McCarthy and Ondaatje, *From Celluloid to Cyberspace*, 3.

<sup>69</sup> P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also, Paul Arthur, *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film Since 1965* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, eds., *Experimental Cinema, The Film Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>70</sup> See, Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David Curtis, *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty-Year Evolution* (London: Studio Vista, 1971); Sheldon Renan, *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (New York: Dutton, 1967).

film studies literature and is reflective of the way in which these films were defined as personal statements of an individual craftsperson or auteur.

Similarly, the literature related to video art suggests work in this medium is a distinct art form with its own aesthetic concerns and a history that runs parallel, but separate from the production of film related media. Here, the advances in video technology are emphasized as new technologies open new opportunities for artists to create of individual works and broadcast their productions to a wider audience.<sup>71</sup> The development of video and film technology also serves as the foundation for the discussions of digital media art and new media; however, this literature emphasizes individual works, artists, and aesthetic movements within the medium, rather than the organizations that support the production and distribution of such works.<sup>72</sup>

Beyond this focus on the media art object, the 2002 report continues, “there are few systematic empirical data on such features of media arts as the size and characteristics of their audiences, the employment and background characteristics of media artists, and the number and features of organizations that produce, distribute, and fund the media arts.”<sup>73</sup> The National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) provides a few sources of empirical data about the media arts sector and the organizations that support it through their “Mapping the Field Project,” a longitudinal survey initiated in 2010.<sup>74</sup> Along with the organizational members of NAMAC, the survey targeted members of five major media arts organizations: the Alliance of

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<sup>71</sup> See, Chris Meigh-Andrews, *Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (Berg: New York, 2006); Kate Horsfield, “Busting the Tube: A Brief History of Video Art,” in *Feedback: The Video Data Bank Catalog of Video Art and Artist Interviews*, eds. Kate Horsfield and Lucas Hilderbrand (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 7-16.

<sup>72</sup> See, Peter Lunenfeld, *Snap to Grid: A User’s Guide to Digital Arts, Media, and Cultures* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> McCarthy and Ondaatje, *From Celluloid to Cyberspace*, 3.

<sup>74</sup> 431 of 1170 organizations responded to the original survey for a response rate of 37%. The second survey was conducted during 2013. National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, “Mapping the Field: 2010,” accessed December 18, 2013, <http://namac.org/mapping-the-field-2010>.

Artists Communities, the Alliance for Community Media, Independent Media Arts Preservation, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, and the National Federation of Community Broadcasters. The survey collected data related to organizational structure, media focus, services offered, staff demographics, funding and revenue sources, and membership data from responding organizations. However, the survey takes a sweeping view of the media arts sector, including a variety of organizations that support the media arts, not media arts centers specifically.

Outside the work of NAMAC, film historian Scott MacDonald has attempted to fill this gap in the literature with a series of volumes historicizing several artist-run organizations that supported the production and exhibition of independent media in the United States – film distributor Canyon Cinema, and cinema societies, Cinema 16 and Art in Cinema.<sup>75</sup> Each monograph begins with a brief history of the organization, followed by an edited “sampling” of interview transcripts, personal letters, programming notes, as well as materials previously published in newspapers and trade journals, selected by the author from personal and organizational collections. With little published research to build on and few archives holding the primary source materials, MacDonald creates his own archives in an attempt to influence future study of the material, “provid[ing] a lure toward a remarkable moment in the institutional

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<sup>75</sup> See, Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Scott MacDonald, *Art in Cinema: Documents Towards a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Scott MacDonald, *Canyon Cinema: The Life and Times of an Independent Film Distributor* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008).

As a film distributor, Canyon Cinema’s primary function is the promotion and distribution of individual films. Cinema societies like Cinema 16 and Art in Cinema relied on distributors like Canyon to provide titles for their screenings. These societies ranged in size and scale and could be found in organizations as large as the United Nations and as small as local public libraries. Dedicated to the appreciation of cinema in all its forms, cinema societies sought to educate general audiences about media produced outside of Hollywood. For further description of these organizations see, Ciecile Starr, ed., *Film Society Primer* (Forest Hills, NY: American Federation of Film Societies, 1956).

history of independent film.”<sup>76</sup> MacDonald’s works represent one of the few attempts to historicize institutions that supported independent media practices throughout the 1960s and 70s, but they are specific to each organization, providing little connection to the wider media landscape.

A smaller body of literature focuses less on the development of specific organizations, and instead describes attempts to build audiences for independent media. Barbara Wilinsky explores the development of “art house cinema” in her *Sure Seaters*. This brief history describes the development of alternative venues for foreign and avant-garde works. The screening venues were “often small theaters in urban areas or university towns that screened ‘offbeat’ films such as independent Hollywood, foreign language, and documentary films.”<sup>77</sup> Wilinsky includes cinema societies such as Art in Cinema and Cinema 16 as well as the Museum of Modern Art’s Film Program and screenings at universities across the country, describing the growing audience for this particular mode of exhibition that supported and legitimized the study of film as an art form.

Film historian Anthony Slide provides a foil for Wilinsky’s history focusing instead on the “non-theatrical” film, or educational and industrial films. Slide’s history describes the businesses and production houses that specialized in education and industrial films for circulation in non-commercial venues such as schools, churches, and classrooms.<sup>78</sup> His study relies on trade journals, *Educational Screen*, *Business Screen Magazine*, *Film News*, *Sightlines*,

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<sup>76</sup> MacDonald, *Cinema 16*, 29.

<sup>77</sup> Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Slide, *Before Video: A History of the Non-Theatrical Film* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

and *Film Library Quarterly*, suggesting the lack of primary sources related to these alternative sites of production.

Both Wilinsky and Slide describe alternative sites of film production and distribution, targeting audiences outside of mainstream cinema viewership. There is less focus here on individual works and artists, but each addresses only one sector of film production and distribution. While these histories represent a small but growing interest in alternative sites of production and distribution, media arts centers are not directly addressed in either of the histories.

The final and perhaps most abundant source of literature related to media arts and media arts centers is described as “fugitive,” that is, “scattered across a wide array of sources including newspapers, magazines, academic journals, exhibition catalogues, and online sites that are difficult to find using standard bibliographic sources.”<sup>79</sup> A variety of trade journals and publications contain pieces of the history of the media arts movement, but these often brief articles focus on specific organizations or projects, rarely connecting to the wider media arts movement. Such articles are often generated by those who are closely involved with media arts centers. Lucy Fischer and Bill Judson, Pittsburgh film educators with ties to Pittsburgh Filmmakers, provide a brief history of the organization’s founding as an artist co-op and cinema society in the early 1970s in “Independent Film in Pittsburgh.”<sup>80</sup> The authors connect Pittsburgh Filmmakers to other organizations in the area, such as the Carnegie Museum of Art, but not to the wider media arts community. More recently, Robert Haller, former director of Pittsburgh Filmmakers, published his history of the organization’s influence on the avant-garde film

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<sup>79</sup> McCarthy and Ondaatje, *From Celluloid to Cyberspace*, 3.

<sup>80</sup> Lucy Fischer and Bill Judson, “Independent Film in Pittsburgh,” *Millennium Film Journal* 3 (Winter/Spring 1979): 100-108.



movement, drawing from collections held at the Anthology Film Archives and his personal recollections.<sup>81</sup> Much like Fischer and Judson, Haller describes the local connections between the media center and other Pittsburgh organizations concerned with film production and exhibition, but Haller's descriptions of visiting artists provide the only link to the larger media arts community. Media educator and co-founder of Paper Tiger Television, DeeDee Halleck provides a similar institutional history in her *Hand Held Visions*, a collection of her essays, presentations, lectures, and other published and unpublished works. The works by these authors represent personal reflections, not supported by rigorous research or documentation.<sup>82</sup> They also fail to provide an understanding of the inner workings of the organizations or their function in the wider network of media centers.

A smaller body of literature generated during the late 1970s and early 1980s describes the conferences and reports emerging from the developing media arts movement that culminated in

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<sup>81</sup> Robert A. Haller, *Crossroads: Avant-garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2005).

<sup>82</sup> Similar examples can be found throughout a number of journals focusing on specific organizations. A number of articles highlighting the work of Appalshop, a media center in Whitesburg, Kentucky serve as example of the scattered nature of material related to specific media centers. Herb Smith and Helen Lewis, Appalshop members are interviewed about their involvement with the organization in Jim Wayne Miller, "Appalshop and the History of Appalachia," *Appalachian Journal* (Summer 1984): 410-427. The founding of the organization is reviewed in, Stephen Michael Charbonneau, "Branching Out: Young Appalachian Selves, Autoethnographic Aesthetics, and the Founding of Appalshop," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 37, no. 3 (2009): 137-145; Rend Smith, "Survival and Resistance: Appalshop's First 40 Years," *NAMAC Idea Exchange* (blog), National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, December, 19 December 2008, <http://www.namac.org/node/6630>. Other articles address the media produced at the centers, such as, Jane M. Gaines, "Appalshop Documentaries Inventing and Preserving Appalachia," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 34 (March 1989): 53-63; Andrew Horton, "Film from Appalshop: Documentary Film-Makers in the Appalachians," *Film Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Summer, 1980): 11-14. "Fugitive" websites such as the Experimental Television Center's "Video History Project," also provide some insight into the development of media arts centers. The site serves as a bibliography of sources providing a chronology of reports, conferences, and legislation related to video and media arts. See, Experimental Television Center, "Video History Project," last modified 2011, <http://www.experimentalstvcenter.org>.

the incorporation of NAMAC in 1980.<sup>83</sup> In his discussion of non-profit media organizations, film scholar J. Ronald Green suggests that these types of media organizations had been neglected by film scholarship and overshadowed by commercial film production.<sup>84</sup> His article, "Film and Not-For-Profit Media Institutions," presents an institutional model of the media-culture system that includes media arts centers, here described as "regional media centers."<sup>85</sup> Green's system describes a series of functions that support the growing independent media sector: funding, production, preservation, distribution, exhibition, and study. The organizations represented in this system vary from large institutions now recognized by the moving image archives community as significant players in the field such as the Film Library at the Museum of Modern Art and Pacific Film Archive, to small regional media centers like Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Each institution may provide a range of the functions identified by Green. Pittsburgh Filmmakers is described as a "paradigm case history" encompassing all functions, including preservation, which is defined as "ensuring that works are not lost and are accessible for the future."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Many of the articles related to these NAMAC and media arts centers in these formative years call for the incorporation of media arts organizations and argue for changes in policy at the national level. Others are brief reports on related conferences. See, Sheldon Renan, "The Concept of Regional Film Centers," *Sightlines* 7, no 3 (1973/1974): 7-9; Robert. A. Haller, "The Pittsburgh Regional and Major Media Conference," *Field of Vision* 4 (Fall 1978): 23-24; Wanda Bershen, "Notes from Minnewaska: On Independence," *Field of Vision* 7 (Summer 1979): 2-8; J. Ronald Green, "Film and Video: An Institutional Paradigm and Some Issues of National Policy," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 8, no. 1 (1984): 61-79; J. Ronald Green, "Broader Alliances: Focusing on the Field," *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 15-58.

<sup>84</sup> Like Haller and Halleck, Green also writes from within the movement, serving as president of NAMAC from 1982-1985. Much of his work describes NAMAC's agenda, describing an idealized version of media centers or lobbying for the creation and support of these institutions. See, J. Ronald Green, "Film and Video: An Institutional Paradigm and Some Issues of National Policy," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 8, no. 1 (1984): 61-79; J. Ronald Green, "Broader Alliances: Focusing the Field," *Cinema Journal* 24, no 4 (Summer 1985): 51-58.

<sup>85</sup> J. Ronald Green, "Film and Not-For-Profit Media Institutions," in *Film/Culture: Explorations of Cinema in its Social Context*, ed. Sari Thomas (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982): 37-59.

<sup>86</sup> Green, "Film and Not-For-Profit Media Institutions," 45.

With their focus on the other aspects of production and distribution, this preservation role of media centers has gone unrecognized by the archives community. Interestingly, organizations such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Pacific Film Archive are well known in the moving image archives field, celebrated for their work to promote the preservation and study of film; but, the role of such organizations in the production of media has been deemphasized in the archival literature.<sup>87</sup> These two types of organizations, media arts centers and film archives, remain separate and unequal. Preservation becomes the defining characteristic of a film archive, leaving media centers outside of the scope of the archival practice.

## **2.2 MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVES AND THE ORPHAN FILM MOVEMENT**

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) is understood as one of the largest and most influential moving image archives in the United States. Founded in 1935, the institution played a key role in the formation of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAPF) in 1938. MoMA joined the British Film Institute, the Cinémathèque Française, and Germany's Reichfilmarchiv to form this international organizing body for moving image archives.<sup>88</sup> In the early years, these founding institutions worked to elevate the study of film as art and functioned on the cinémathèque model, that is prioritizing access and exhibition of moving images over

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<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, a number of recognized moving archives are listed among media arts centers. See Renan, "The Concept of Regional Film Centers," 7-9; Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*.

<sup>88</sup> For a concise history of film archives see Chapter 1: History of Moving Image Archives in, Sam Kula, *Appraising Moving Images: Assessing the Archival and Monetary Value of Film and Video Records* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 9-22.

preservation. Preservation was an incidental function to providing access – in order to show films, one must collect them.

Early histories of the development of moving image archives emphasize the role of these institutions in the development and legitimization of moving image archives, along with the role of the personalities and collectors who advocated for developing the moving image collections at each of these institutions.<sup>89</sup> Iris Barry, Henri Langlois, and Ernest Lindgren serve as representatives of their respective institutions, shaping collecting policies according to their individual tastes, preferences, and personalities. Penelope Houston's *Keepers of the Frame* exemplifies these histories, chronicling the development of these large institutions and the efforts of their founders to celebrate the cinematic art form. Published in 1994, the history coincides with the development and professionalization of the moving image archives field, providing a background for a budding profession.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See for example: Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Classics, 1992); Ivan Butler, *To Encourage the Art of Film: The Story of the British Film Institute* (London, Robert Hale, 1971); and Richard Roud, *A Passion For Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinemathèque Française* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>90</sup> Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (London: British Film Institute, 1994). Houston suggests, "film archivists belong to a young profession." Along with the reports from the Library of Congress investigating moving image preservation in the United States, the 1990s represented a decade of professional growth for moving image archivists. The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) was officially incorporated in 1991 as the first professional organizations for individuals. Membership in FIAF is limited to organizations involved in film preservation. FIAF would ratify its first code of ethics for archival practice in 1998. Moving image archivist, Ray Edmondson, and others, began to codify the practice of moving image archiving in the late 1990s, including *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles* first published in 1998 and revised in 2004. See, Ray Edmondson, "Is Film Archiving A Profession?," *Film History* 7 (1995): 245-255; Ray Edmondson, "The Building Blocks of Film Archiving," *Journal of Film Preservation* 50 (March 1995): 55-58; Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles* (Paris: UNESCO, 2004); Helen P. Harrison, ed., *Audiovisual Archives: A Practical Reader* (Paris: UNESCO, 1997).

However, it should be noted that there is still some question as to whether or not moving image archiving is a distinct profession or merely a specialization within the archival field. A recent study published in the *IASA Journal* suggests that the field may still be experiencing an "identity crisis." The author suggests that the sample size of the study was too small to draw any distinct conclusions about the field, but suggests that from the preliminary findings, at this time it is "inappropriate to consider audiovisual archiving a profession," based on the attitudes of the respondents to the survey. See, Tim Bathgate, "'What We Believe We Are, Say We Are and Demonstrate We Are': A Quantitative Analysis of the Attitudes of Audiovisual Archivists," *IASA Journal* 37 (July 2011): 20.

Houston's text illustrates the sense of loss permeating the moving image archives field, citing the loss of 80% of silent cinema by neglect, purposeful destruction, and the cannibalistic nature of nitrate film.<sup>91</sup> This statistic is often cited as justification for the preservation of moving images and became a rallying cry for image archivists.<sup>92</sup> Houston's text also gives voice to the anxieties related to the self-destructive nature of the cinematic medium and the obsolescence of moving image technology that have become central to how moving image preservation is defined. Referring to how preservation formats are described, she suggests "expressions such as 'archival' are themselves no longer used;" instead, "definitions are in terms of the life expectancy of dyes, of the film base, of electronic software and hardware."<sup>93</sup> This anxiety and sense of loss shifted the priorities of major film archives from access to the physical preservation of film materials. For moving image archives, preservation is closely linked to the filmic artifact. Preservation efforts represent an attempt to perpetuate the original document and therefore are tied very closely to the film object, the celluloid itself.<sup>94</sup>

Over the past few years, this preservation discourse has become a subject of study for film scholars. Film historian Carolyn Frick argues that archivists should reconsider preservation as the defining function of film archives and explores the concept of preservation as it has been used to shape what should be collected and preserved. Frick asks, "In the twenty-first century, is

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<sup>91</sup> Houston also provides the statistics on the films that have been saved in the appendix to her text, "How Much Has Been Saved?" Houston, *Keepers of the Frame*, 165-174.

<sup>92</sup> The statistic appears in a number of texts including the *Film Preservation 1993* report. See also Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait*, 9 (see chap. 1, n. 5).

<sup>93</sup> Houston, *Keepers of the Frame*, 156.

<sup>94</sup> This shift is reflected in archival manuals which stress the physical preservation of film materials, demonstrating the technical knowledge required to properly archive moving image materials. See: National Film Preservation Foundation, *The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004); Steven Davidson and Gregory Lukow, eds., *The Administration of Television Newsfilm and Videotape Collections: A Curatorial Manual* (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1997); Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer, eds., *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Boston: Butterworth Heinemann, 2000).

this definition of what constitutes acceptable preservation standards still the most important priority for moving image collections?”<sup>95</sup> Both Frick and fellow film historian Janna Jones have explored how the concepts of “archive” and “preservation” have been invoked in moving image archival practice and shaped the policies related to moving image preservation. Both authors mirror earlier histories of moving image preservation in the sense that they concentrate the efforts of the large players in film preservation (MoMA, Eastman House, and the Library of Congress). However, both authors also address the influence of Hollywood studios, copyright policy, funding policies of the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Film Institute, and the founding of the National Film Preservation Board and National Film Preservation Foundation on film preservation policies in the United States.

Archival scholar Karen Gracy takes the opposite approach, studying how preservation has been defined from within the field in an ethnographic study of archival practice. Gracy approaches film as a “manufactured commodity,”<sup>96</sup> again revealing the field’s bias towards the commercial pursuits of film production, but also exploring the relationship of studios and film producers to their intellectual and cultural property.

Reflecting on the International Federation of Film Archives’ code of ethics, Gracy observes, “the term ‘film archive’ arose more from a desire to create an image of stability than from an aspiration to describe an institutional mission... A film archive must consider preservation to be its top priority, and thus, if an organization does not preserve films, it is not an archive.”<sup>97</sup> This pre-occupation with the physical preservation of the moving image object

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<sup>95</sup> Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>96</sup> Karen Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 18.

<sup>97</sup> Gracy, *Film Preservation*, 19.

emerges from the 1993 Library of Congress report which defined and proposed a preservation plan for the nation's moving image collections. Gracy also demonstrates the tensions and competing values emerging from film studios and archives, drawing similar conclusions to Frick and Jones who describe the external policies impacting preservation within archival institutions.

All three authors suggest that Hollywood studios have had a significant impact on how preservation has been defined in the United States. Recounting actress Mary Pickford's donation to the Library of Congress, Frick suggests the desires of large studios and donors to protect their interests in moving image assets shifted the archival community's attention from providing broad access to moving images to preserving and maintaining the physical material.<sup>98</sup> Hollywood lobbyists would have a significant impact on copyright policy and preservation funding throughout the 1970s and 1980s as television and home video became new outlets for motion picture distribution. However, Jones suggests that the reluctance of the studios to support the 1993 preservation plan proposed by the National Film Preservation Board allowed the preservation community to advocate for the preservation of moving images produced outside of these commercial conglomerates.<sup>99</sup>

This most recent wave of film preservation prioritizes "orphan" films. The term was first used in reference to film preservation in the 1993 National Film Preservation Board, originally describing works in any format for which the copyright owner was unknown. In this context, an orphan film is defined as a film that "does not have an apparent copyright holder and lacks commercial viability; thus, it does not have much of a chance of any persons or institutions

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<sup>98</sup> Pickford did not want her films to be exploited, arguing that she did not want her films exhibited "for people 'walking in off the sidewalk.'" Frick, *Saving Cinema*, 57.

<sup>99</sup> Jones, *The Past is a Moving Picture*, 91.

paying for its care or preservation.”<sup>100</sup> The term has been appropriated to reflect a shift in preservation priorities from Hollywood and commercial cinema that dominated the early years of film preservation. The Orphan Film Symposium suggests the term includes:

all manner of films outside of the commercial mainstream: public domain materials, home movies, outtakes, unreleased films, industrial and educational movies, independent documentaries, ethnographic films, newsreels, censored material, underground works, experimental pieces, silent-era productions, stock footage, found footage, medical films, kinescopes, small- and unusual-gauge films, amateur productions, surveillance footage, test reels, government films, advertisements, sponsored films, student works, and sundry other ephemeral pieces of celluloid (or paper or glass or tape or . . . ).<sup>101</sup>

*Film Preservation 1993* not only advocated for the preservation of motion pictures, but also helped to promote this shift in funding priorities away from Hollywood films and toward a broader range of films deserving preservation.<sup>102</sup>

This shift not only reflects a growing prioritization of smaller cinema by the preservation community, but also represents a shift in focus from large institutions like the Library of Congress, George Eastman House and UCLA’s Film and Television Archive, to smaller archival institutions preserving a variety of orphan works. The establishment of the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) in 1996, the funding arm of the National Film Preservation Board, is cited as one of the major influences in establishing this shift, as the NFPF limited the funding the federal government could direct towards mainstream motion picture preservation, directing funds towards the preservation of orphaned works. The re-direction of funds shifted the burden of preservation for Hollywood cinema to the studios and other funding organizations.

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<sup>100</sup> Jones, *The Past is a Moving Picture*, 91.

<sup>101</sup> Orphans Film Symposium, “What is an Orphan Film?,” <http://www.sc.edu/filmsymposium/orphanfilm.html>.

<sup>102</sup> Jones, *The Past Is A Moving Picture*, 85. See also, chapter 1 of this proposal. Prior to 1992 over 50% of the federal funding for film preservation was designated for the preservation of pre-1929 silent Hollywood cinema.



While the NFPF grants smaller awards, a larger number of archives could now apply for funding to preserve the industrial films, home movies, and other orphaned works found in their collections.<sup>103</sup>

This new prioritization of a range of media production compensated for the preoccupation with nitrate film in the early preservation efforts, but the moving image archives literature remains preoccupied with film preservation. Frick, Jones, and Gracy each limit their studies to a discussion of the influences on film preservation, while making little mention of the preservation of television and videotape, the subject of the National Film Preservation Board's 1997 report. Each of the authors suggest that digital production and preservation processes will greatly impact the current understanding of preservation in the moving image archives field, but do not acknowledge the other moving image media that will also be impacted by this shift.<sup>104</sup>

These studies do represent a break from earlier histories of film preservation and film archives which focused on specific individuals or organizations, but they remain preoccupied with the film object and with the larger institutions supporting the preservation of film. Smaller regional archives are mentioned, but the efforts of traditional archives and manuscript

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<sup>103</sup> The National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) was established in direct response to the Film Preservation Plan proposed in *Film Preservation 1993*. The NFPF is charged with "encourage[ing], accept[ing], and administer[ing] private gifts to promote and ensure the preservation and public accessibility of the nation's film heritage." National Film Preservation Foundation, "Why the NFPF Was Created," <http://www.filmpreservation.org/about/why-the-nfpf-was-created>. See also, Jones, *The Past is a Moving Picture*, 105.

<sup>104</sup> For a brief history of television preservation see, Lynn Spigel, "Our TV Heritage: Television, the Archives, and the Reasons for Preservation," in *A Companion to Television*, ed., Janet Wasko (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005): 67-99. Spigel suggests a similar path of development for television archives, citing the influence of television studios in shaping the preservation policies of television archives.

repositories and other organizations that do not specifically focus on the collection of moving images remain outside the scope of these major studies.<sup>105</sup>

In the pioneering years of moving image archiving, providing access to moving images was prioritized over the preservation of the artifact in an attempt to elevate the popular entertainment medium to works of art. Once moving images were accepted as art and part of our cultural heritage, the preservation of the physical object took precedence and has shaped preservation policies and the practice of moving image archiving. In the formative years of film archiving when access was prioritized, media arts centers could have been included among the film archives working to promote the study of film. However, as preservation now dominates the moving image archives discourse, media arts centers have been excluded from this group of organizations. Their efforts to preserve and provide access to the media they create remain unrecognized by archival practitioners.

## **2.3 COMMUNITY MEDIA AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA PRACTICES**

As preservation is only one of the many activities that media arts centers support, they remained an unexplored subject for moving image archives; but, the media produced within these organizations has been embraced by another growing area of study within the communications field, community media. However, as with the moving image archives scholarship, media arts centers are not specifically named within this body of literature. Rather

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<sup>105</sup> A 2008 study of film preservation in museums, archives, and libraries demonstrated the difficulties “traditional” collecting institutions face in preserving their media collections. Over 20% of the institutions surveyed described their video and film collections as “in danger.” Other preservation challenges included a lack of staff expertise and technological obsolescence. See, Jen Mohan, *Environmental Scan of Moving Image Collections in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Digital Library Foundation, 2008).

than focusing on media as art, community media stresses the importance of access and participation in the production and consumption of media.

Like the media arts, community media also traces its origins to avant-garde and underground cinema. The availability of 16mm film equipment and video technology in the late 1960s and early 1970s helped to spur amateur and independent media production. While avant-garde and underground media are often associated with artistic and aesthetic movements, community media describe a different mode of production, stressing the power of communications technology to mobilize communities through media production.

Generally defined, community media “refers to grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity.”<sup>106</sup> Access includes the availability to equipment, audiences, bandwidth, training, and the establishment of policy that allows communities utilize to these media resources.<sup>107</sup> Community refers to groups of individuals bound by geographic location, ethnic structures, cultural groups, and a variety of other social structures self-defined through a common identity.

Related to community media are a variety of sub-genres of oppositional media. Each of these categories describe media produced outside of the mainstream media outlets in a variety of different contexts, primarily defined by the political aims of the creators. Alternative media is the broadest of these related categories, describing “media that are alternative to, or in opposition to, something else.” This “something else” is typically defined as the mass-media or

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<sup>106</sup> Kevin Howley, *Community Media: People Places, and Communication Technologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>107</sup> Frances J. Berrigan, ed., *Access: Some Western Models of Community Media* (Belgium: UNESCO, 1977), 16-19.

mainstream-media “widely available and widely consumed.”<sup>108</sup> Further politicizing the aims of community media, activist media “encourage[s] readers to get actively involved in social change.”<sup>109</sup> The focus here is on the audience and the consumption of the media rather than the mode of production; however, activist media shares a do-it-yourself ethos with community media.

Radical media blurs the lines between these two distinctions, “represent[ing] alternative and marginalized viewpoints of underrepresented groups, working against the power of mainstream media conglomerates to restore balance to the relationship between the producer and consumer of media.”<sup>110</sup> Related terms include alternative journalism, citizen journalism, citizen’s media, democratic media, emancipatory media, and social movement media.<sup>111</sup> Robert Downing suggests that radical alternative media is on the furthest end of the spectrum of alternative media production demanding the most active involvement from the audience as critical readers and working both overtly and covertly in direct opposition to popular culture and mass culture.<sup>112</sup> On the opposite end of this spectrum is citizen’s media, or the “media texts of ordinary citizens.”<sup>113</sup>

All of these terms bleed together, describing a mode of production that emphasizes the critical consumption of media products and provides a critique of mass-produced, mainstream media. Studies of community media use the media products to investigate the political aims of

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<sup>108</sup> Mitzi Waltz, *Alternative and Activist Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>109</sup> Mitzi Waltz, *Alternative and Activist Media*, 3.

<sup>110</sup> Chris Atton, “Current Issues in Alternative Media Research,” *Sociological Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007):18.

<sup>111</sup> Atton, “Current Issues in Alternative Media Research,” 18.

<sup>112</sup> John D. H. Downing, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 3.

<sup>113</sup> Clemencia Rodriguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens’ Media* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2001), 4. Rodriguez re-conceptualizes alternative media, and suggests that the concept of citizens media “break[s] away from the traditional static and essentialist definitions of democracy, citizenship, and democratic communicative action, concepts that necessarily inform theories of alternative media.”

the community rather than studying the organizations that support the production of such media.<sup>114</sup> Media scholar Chris Atton suggests a new theoretical and methodological framework for investigating alternative media in which media is defined by its modes of creation, production, and distribution, not simply by the radicalized content.<sup>115</sup> His framework accounts for not only the alternative themes and aesthetics, but also the alternative business practices and organizational structures emerging from the production of alternative media.

Atton's work builds from studies of fanzine culture both in print and online. Through investigating the organizational structures supporting the production of these publications, Atton has identified 'infoshops' as the hubs of this alternative media production. Infoshops can take two different forms. The first is described as a "radical information center" or "radical community library." This version of the infoshop provides a reading-space and serves as a distribution hub for alternative publications. These communal spaces can be freestanding or part of a larger organization. The second use of the term refers to the larger organizational structure that supports the alternative production culture, "providing a forum for alternative cultural, economic, political, and social activities."<sup>116</sup>

Infoshops bear a direct resemblance to media arts centers. Atton suggests infoshops are often run by the users in a distributed nature, without a formal hierarchy, similar to the co-op and membership models favored by many of the media arts centers. Infoshops provide resources and technology, serve as hubs for distribution, and act as a general information resources for those seeking alternative publications or wishing to publish themselves. Other studies of community

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<sup>114</sup> See for example, Kevin Howley, ed., *Understanding Community Media* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010).

<sup>115</sup> Chris Atton, *Alternative Media* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2002), 2-3.

<sup>116</sup> Atton, "The Infoshop: The Alternative Information Centre of the 1990s," *New Library World* 100, no. 1 (1999), 25.

media investigate individual communities or types of media, theorizing the social aspects of production or consumption of this media. Alternatively, Atton explores the support network for alternative media production, suggesting an alternative organizational structure and culture that mirrors media arts centers.

In this body of literature, media is understood as a communications technology rather than a mode of artistic expression. Issues of access, power, media literacy, and technology training are emphasized by the communities generating such media. In this way, community media embraces the full range of functions that media arts centers support. However, broadcast media such as cable television, radio, and electronic modes of communication are described as the primary modes of production for communities. While independent film and video are created in opposition to mainstream modes of production, they are produced by individuals and, as such, excluded from studies of community media.

## **2.4 COMMUNITY ARCHIVES AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

Community is also being explored by traditional archival scholarship through the concept of community archives. This final intersection between archival theory and media arts centers provides an additional framework for investigating the work of media arts centers. Community archiving is related to the idea of the citizen archivist in that the concept breaks down the barrier between professional and amateur practices, recognizes inherent power of archives, and

acknowledges alternative spaces in which collecting is taking place.<sup>117</sup> Similar to community media, the participatory nature of community archiving is stressed along with the community building aspects of collecting and documenting a shared history.

Archival scholar Andrew Flinn suggests that community archives “are the grassroots activities of documenting, recording, and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential.”<sup>118</sup> Community archives may remain independent and autonomous or may partner with traditional collecting institutions such as museums and archives. Issues of custody, control, representation, and access to community records are the central tenets of community archiving.

Community remains a loosely defined concept for archival scholars in an attempt to broadly include a variety of non-traditional archival practices. Flinn emphasizes that community can be broadly conceptualized so long as communities are self-defined “on the basis of locality, culture, faith, background, or other shared identity or interest.”<sup>119</sup> Marginalized and

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<sup>117</sup> Rick Prelinger has been credited with coining the term that refers to, “a person working *outside* established institutions who is doing archival-quality work (not simply collecting), typically in an area that is neglected or inadequately addressed by established collections. Citizen archivists collect and add value to records of significance, many of which ultimately find their ways into institutions.” As quoted in, Ned Thanhouer, “Reconstructing Thanhouer: The Twenty-Five-Year Journey of a Citizen Archivist,” *The Moving Image* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 99, note 13.

Prelinger notes that the moving image archives field owes credit to these “unaffiliated” archivists who preserved moving image materials not traditionally collected by larger archival institutions. See Prelinger’s comments on, Kate Theimer, “Why We Need to Find a Term to Replace ‘Citizen Archivist,’” *Archives Next* (blog), April 9, 2010, <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=1214>.

<sup>118</sup> Andrew Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28:2 (2007): 153.

<sup>119</sup> Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives,” 153.

underrepresented social group and populations that have been otherwise undocumented by traditional archival institutions are the subject of many community archives studies.<sup>120</sup>

However, community archives also include the collections created by communities of practice. Originally conceptualized by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their theory of social learning, communities of practice are social groups defined by a shared practice. This practice is described as “joint enterprise” mutually undertaken by a group of individuals that share common set of communal resources (vocabulary, objects, sensibilities).<sup>121</sup>

David Wallace explored one such community of practice emerging from the community of Grateful Dead fans. Wallace describes the archive of informal recordings of live performances circulated among fans of the Grateful Dead, or “DeadHeads.” For decades, the producers of these recordings or “tapers” illicitly traded audiotapes through the growing network of DeadHeads, until they were officially recognized in 1984 and provided a designated area at concert venues, dubbed the “Official Taper’s Section.”<sup>122</sup> While Wallace describes the role that these “tapers and traders” played in the larger Grateful Dead community, he also describes an emerging community of practice, identified as the “taping community.” These rogue recorders exhibited a set of shared values, established practices, and a common vocabulary. Tapers developed methods for eluding security, standards for recording technologies, and a lexicon for

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<sup>120</sup> The 2009 volume, *Community Archives* includes a number of articles that describe the recordkeeping practices of a number of under-represented and marginalized communities, including: aboriginal groups; queer, gay, and lesbian archives; communities emerging from political struggles; as well as groups defined by their geographic location. See, Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander, eds., *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory* (London: Facet Publishing, 2009).

<sup>121</sup> Etienne Wenger, “Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System,” *Systems Thinker* 9, no. 5 (June 1998): 2.

<sup>122</sup> David A. Wallace, “Co-Creation of the Grateful Dead Sound Archive: Control, Access and Curation Communities,” in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, eds. Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 169.



describing the best areas of concert venues for recording.<sup>123</sup> The DeadHead community developed a circulating archive of these unofficial recordings, supplementing the formal archive of studio recordings produced by the band. Wallace's study suggests an alternative means for defining the concept of community in community archives.

By broadly defining the concepts of community and archive, community archives share a similar indefinable quality with community media. Flinn suggests that "definitions of what a community might be, or what a community archive is and what it might be taken to include are not necessarily clear or fixed."<sup>124</sup> Other associated terms include local history group, oral history project, community history project, community memory project, informal archives, independent archives, or independent community archives. Jeannette Bastian adds to this list the concepts of the embodied archive, non-traditional archive, and living cultural archive.<sup>125</sup> What is common across all of these terms is the notion of a shared identity and the desire to document a common history.

Jeannette Bastian's concept of the living and embodied archive suggest that community archives not only include traditional paper-based documentation but other forms of cultural expression that may not include the traditional archival concept of the record. In her studies of community, Bastian includes intangible aspects of culture such as performance and oral tradition.<sup>126</sup> A wide variety of documentation can be found within community archives: material artifacts, oral histories, audiovisual documentation, personal testimonies, analog and paper

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<sup>123</sup> Wallace, "Co-Creation of the Grateful Dead Sound Archive," 177.

<sup>124</sup> Flinn, "Community Histories, Community Archives," 151-152.

<sup>125</sup> Jeannette A. Bastian, "Play mas': Carnival in the Archives and the Archives in Carnival: Records and Community Identity in the US Virgin Islands," *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 113-125.; Jeannette A. Bastian, "The Records of Memory, the Archives of Identity: Celebrations, Texts and Archival Sensibilities," *Archival Science* (2012): doi:10.1007/s10502-012-9184-3.

<sup>126</sup> See, Bastian, "Play mas," 113-125, and Bastian, "The Records of Memory, the Archives of Identity" *Archival Science* (2012).

materials, and ephemera. Like the concept of community, the record is also self-defined and can include anything that may have significance to that particular community.

Community archives have also been connected to the availability of communications technology, particularly the ability to create and share digital collections on the Internet. Andrew Flinn suggests that participatory digital technologies have had a significant impact on the development of community archives, providing new opportunities for communities to generate and share their stories and histories.<sup>127</sup> In this way, community archives are closely tied to community media. Both concepts describe modes of communication in which communities choose to represent themselves, providing an alternative to mainstream culture.

While the concept of community archives stresses the role of the community in constructing its own archives, archival scholars have also begun to theorize the role of the archivist in these community constructs. In an ethnographic study of several community archives projects in the UK, Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd described a model for a participatory approach to community archiving, suggesting a role for the professional archivist in assisting the community archivist. Archival professionals can provide expertise in the areas of preservation, conservation, curation, and dissemination of community collections. Archivists can also share their knowledge in the areas of copyright and digital representation for community archivists undertaking digitization projects.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Andrew Flinn, "Independent Community Archives and Community-Generated Content: 'Writing, Saving and Sharing our Histories,'" *Convergence* 16.1 (2010): 39-51.

<sup>128</sup> Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn and Elizabeth Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector: From Handing Over to Handing On," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, nos. 1-2 (2010): 67-68.

These cooperative models suggest a new role for archivists as community consultants; however, Flinn observes that community archives “challenge the legitimacy of the mainstream sector,” suggesting a tension between professional and amateur.<sup>129</sup> Conversely, many community archives have evolved from a parallel distrust from communities towards the official archive. Instead, professional archivists must join community archivists as partners, recognizing the expertise that the community has to offer. Community archives provide opportunities to fill gaps in the archival record by supplementing collections or suggesting new areas of collection for archives. The alternative practices developed within community archives also present opportunities for archival practitioners to reflect upon and revise their own practices.<sup>130</sup>

Like the orphan film movement, which has expanded the notion of what counts as part of moving image heritage, community archives represents an attempt to expand on the notion of a collective national heritage or national history and legitimize the histories and heritage of groups which identify in other ways outside of the nation-state. Whereas moving image archives are oriented towards defining the object, community archives focus on people and their attempts at self-documentation. Similar to community media, community archives embrace new ways of representing, collecting, and preserving documentation that may not fit the standards of mainstream archival organizations.

Moving image archivists have not yet embraced the concept of community archives, but this concept provides a useful framework for understanding media arts centers. As non-traditional archival spaces, the concept of community archives allows media arts centers to be understood on their own terms, rather than in archival terms. While the practices at media

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<sup>129</sup> Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives,” 167. See also, Andrew Flinn, “An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship? Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge,” *Ariadne* 62 (January 2010), <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/print/issue62/flinn>.

<sup>130</sup> Stevens, Flinn and Shepherd, “New Frameworks For Community Engagement,” 66, 68.

centers may not meet archival standards, the collecting practices developed in these institutions demonstrate a desire to preserve and share the media that is produced within these organizations.

## 2.5 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AND THE RESIDUAL CATEGORY

In classification systems, the residual category is described as “that which is left over after a classification is built,” the “other,” “none of the above,” and “not otherwise specified.”<sup>131</sup> These “garbage categories” are homes for the “ubiquitous other.”<sup>132</sup> They are a catch-all for the things that just don’t fit. Media arts centers appear to belong to such a category. These organizations are situated at the intersections of the bodies of scholarship discussed, but do not squarely fit within the boundaries of the literature as it has been framed. In fact, each of these areas of scholarship represents additional residual categories, describing concepts of media production and organizations that are not easily classified.

Media arts is perhaps the most troublesome, described as both a set of practices and genres encompassing media produced on film, video, or in electronic form. Documentaries, narratives, experimental works, and installation art are all included in this catch-all category. The media arts are distinct from the plastic arts in that they utilize moving forms of visual media, and from performance art that suggests live, staged performances. The ubiquity of ‘media arts’ is useful in that it embraces all time-based, moving-image media that are often placed into artificial categories according to the aesthetics of a particular moving image medium (i.e. film

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<sup>131</sup> Susan Leigh Star and Geoffrey C. Bowker, “Enacting Silence: Residual Categories as a Challenge for Ethics, Information Systems, and Communication,” *Ethics and Information Technology* 9 (2007): 274.

<sup>132</sup> Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 149.

and video). As this chapter has demonstrated, these artificial distinctions have been upheld by a number of fields of study. In this sense, the media arts is a useful concept for embracing commonalities between different media forms. However, the all-inclusiveness of the concept also makes it a moving target and difficult to theorize in a meaningful way.

This blurring of categories can also be seen in the moving image archives literature. Defined by the preservation of the film object, moving image archivists have attempted to embrace the more general term ‘audiovisual’ or ‘moving image’ archives, but remain preoccupied with the filmic object. Moving image preservation has been defined by the preservation of the original film element. These distinctions begin to blur with video and digital productions, which must be reformatted to ensure their long-term preservation, destroying the principles on which film preservation has been based.

Moreover, moving image archives have become their own residual category of sorts. Broadcasting libraries, stock footage libraries, cinemathèques, museums, national archives, regional archives, and studio archives are all terms that describe the various institutions concerned with the continued preservation of moving image materials.<sup>133</sup> Joan Schwartz has demonstrated that archives and archival collections consisting primarily of visual materials are often defined as distinct from traditional archival institutions concerned with the preservation of paper-based materials. Schwartz argues that the logocentrism of archival theory and practice have marginalized photographic records and other visual forms of documentation. While concerns for preservation of the physical medium often lead to the physical segregation of photographic collections from related textual materials, the nature of how archivists refer to photographs “others” these records in the archive. The terms “non-textual,” “special media,” or

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<sup>133</sup> See, Ray Edmondson, et. al. “The AV Archive Definition and Typology,” in Helen P. Harrison, ed., *Audiovisual Archives: A Practical Reader* (Paris: UNESCO, 1997): 40-42.

“graphic materials” are used to distinguish photographic records from traditional text-based documents and manuscripts. Professionals who specialize in the use of such materials are “photo” or “media” archivists, signified as different from general archivists.<sup>134</sup> The push for professionalization from moving image archivists can be seen as one of the effects of this othering of visual media within the archival field, as audiovisual archiving is relegated to a residual category of archival practice.

‘Orphan films’ and ‘community media’ are equally difficult to define. The exhaustive list of moving images included in the concept of “orphan works” has benefited moving image archives, giving name to a group of moving images that had been previously unrecognized by the preservation community. However, this residual category, including all manner of media produced outside of Hollywood studios blurs the distinctions between the different modes of production and reinforces the preoccupation with the media object, as archivists hunt out individual films to save. In a similar vein, community media embraces a wide range of media products generated in opposition to the mainstream media. The term excludes as much as it includes failing to acknowledge film and video works not produced for mass broadcast over the airwaves or Internet.

Community archives are an attempt to bring a residual category into the archival field. Terry Cook explains that this shift in the archival paradigm “challenge[s] [archivists] to stop seeing community archiving as something local, amateur, and of limited value to the broader society and to start recognizing that community-based archiving is often a long-standing and

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<sup>134</sup> The SAA’s *A Glossary of Archival & Records Terminology* includes several related terms for “special records,” defined as, “materials stored separately from other records because of their physical form or characteristics require unusual care or because they have nonstandard sizes.” These terms refer specifically to visual materials: “nonprint materials,” “nontextual records,” and “visual materials.”

well-established praxis.”<sup>135</sup> But in an attempt to include all community-collecting practices, the concept remains undefined. Community archives are yet another residual category, describing any self-identified community and their self-defined collections of self-identified records.

Discussing the various functions of media arts centers, J. Ronald Green asked, “should production services take place outside the context of distribution, exhibition, study, and preservation activities,” and conversely, “should preservation take place outside the context of production, distribution, exhibition and study activities?”<sup>136</sup> These two questions sum up the issues addressed here. Moving image archivists have attempted to separate preservation as a function that is outside the purview of producers of media, and conversely, moving image archivists are solely concerned with keeping and maintaining these records over time. This classification of practices has artificially divided the field, which has assumed that these practices are separate and unequal.

Residual categories create a silence. Objects are designated as “other” because they are unknowable and unknown.<sup>137</sup> Trapped at the intersections of several residual categories, media arts centers have remained un-named and un-recognized, relegated to the “other” or “miscellaneous” category. This project attempts to bring media arts centers in from the periphery to become the object of study. With their concern for the total ecology of media production, what can be learned from these organizations?

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<sup>135</sup> Terry Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms,” *Archival Science* (2012): doi: 10.1007/s10502-012-9180-7.

<sup>136</sup> J. Ronald Green, “Film and Video: An Institutional Paradigm and Some Issues of National Policy,” *Journal of Cultural Economics* 8, no. 1 (1984): 63, 65.

<sup>137</sup> Star and Bowker, “Enacting Silence,” 274.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized case study methods to answer the following research questions: What can the history and development of three differing media arts centers – Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Paper Tiger Television, and Termite Television Collective – reveal about the role of media arts centers in the collection and preservation of independent media and the development of archival practices in non-profit media organizations? How can the identified practices impact the future management of media collections in archival organizations?

#### **3.1 CASE STUDY AS A RESEARCH METHOD**

Robert Yin describes case study as a method and research paradigm rather than a feature of research design or technique for data collection. He defines case study as, “ an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”<sup>138</sup> The strength of the case study method, Yin proposes, is the utilization of a variety of evidence, including documents, physical artifacts, interviews, and observations to create a robust and holistic understanding of the particular case or cases at the center of the study.

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<sup>138</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 18.



Case study has been identified as a method that is particularly suited for the study of organizations.<sup>139</sup> Organizational case studies rely on the same variety of data points suggested by Yin, but include a historical component that allows the researcher to track the development of an organization over time. Information professionals G. E. Gorman and Peter Clayton suggest historical study as a necessary component of an organizational case study, arguing that in order “to understand an organization you must also understand its historical roots, its evolution over time.”<sup>140</sup> As media arts centers have not been the subject of previous study, case study method allowed for the investigation of current practices at targeted sites as well as their history and development. Media technology is always pushing forward to provide new creative opportunities for media producers. In response, media arts centers have adapted their practices over time to keep up with the changing standards of the field, introducing this media technology to the communities of creators they support. A study of current practices alone would have been too limiting. Understanding the development of each site over time allowed for the investigation of the influence of these technological changes within each organization as well as the shifting priorities that followed changes in leadership, along with the impact of other external influences such as the availability of funding through specific granting agencies (such as the National Endowment for the Arts), and changes in preservation priorities in the wider archival field.

Given that there has been little scholarship investigating media arts centers and the media arts movement in the United States, the variables impacting practices at these organizations

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<sup>139</sup> See, Andrea D. Ellinger, Karen E. Watkins and Victoria J. Marsick, “Case Study Research Methods,” in *Research in Organizations: Foundations and Methods of Inquiry*, eds. Richard A. Swanson and Elwood F. Holton, III (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2005), 327-350; and G. E. Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional: A Practical Handbook*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (London: Facet Publishing, 2005), 47-63.

<sup>140</sup> Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 42.

could not be immediately identified. As such, this study was exploratory in nature.<sup>141</sup> The subjects for this study were purposefully selected to provide opportunities to study both the appearance of media centers as a phenomenon as well as the development of practices within each of the organizations.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Cases for a particular research study may be selected because they represent “ideal” types or extreme cases.<sup>142</sup> With the lack of scholarship related to media centers, the “ideal” media arts center remains an unknown. Points for comparison were designed into this study through the selection of multiple cases. This design provided opportunities to begin to develop a typology of media arts centers and opportunities for generalization, whereas a single case could only describe a single organization. Multi-case studies are described as “richer” than single case studies, “because they offer contrasts that help the researcher better understand why and how a phenomenon occurs in one way in one setting and a completely different way in another setting.”<sup>143</sup> Through utilizing multiple case studies, this study provides a more robust description than a singular study and can serve as the basis for future studies of these types of organizations.

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<sup>141</sup> Gorman and Clayton suggest, the purpose of an exploratory study is “to investigate little-understood phenomena, to identify important variables.” See, Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 95.

<sup>142</sup> Ellinger, Watkins and Marsick, “Case Study Research Methods,” 336.

<sup>143</sup> Ellinger, Watkins and Marsick, “Case Study Research Methods,” 336.

The three cases identified for this study were purposefully selected from the members of National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) for several reasons. My interest in this project began with another research project investigating the history of Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Pittsburgh Filmmakers is one of the oldest media arts centers in the country, officially incorporating in 1971. As part of its mission, the organization provides production facilities, educational opportunities, and screening venues to the Pittsburgh region. Additionally, the organization has custody of several film collections, but does not have an organizational mandate to collect. In this way, Pittsburgh Filmmakers has become a repository of last resort for these collections.<sup>144</sup> Pittsburgh Filmmakers has also been described as one of the few remaining media arts centers that continues to operate as a ‘true’ media arts center.<sup>145</sup> For these reasons, Pittsburgh Filmmakers was selected as one site for this study.

The additional sites were selected for their geographic location and concentration in a particular media, differing from Pittsburgh Filmmakers. While Paper Tiger Television broadcasts a majority of the media produced by the collective through public access cable television, Termite TV uses its website to broadcast and develop media projects. Both East Coast organizations are members of National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture and can be designated as media arts centers as defined in this study.

More significantly, these organizations were purposefully selected to provide a comparison of media centers over time. While Pittsburgh Filmmakers was founded as a filmmakers’ collective, Paper Tiger Television was founded as an outlet for community access television in 1982, and Termite Television Collective a decade later as the Internet emerged as a

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<sup>144</sup> See Chapter 1 for further discussion of the cases selected for this study.

<sup>145</sup> Described as such by Executive Director, Charlie Humphrey and NAMAC director Jack Walsh.

significant communications medium. As the oldest of the organizations, Pittsburgh Filmmakers has addressed the widest variety of media, from film to analog video and now, digital media. This research design provided opportunities to not only study the changes within the individual organizations, but also to understand the development of media arts centers over time. Each case was studied individually looking both historically at the development of each organization and at the present practices in the broad categories of preservation, representation, and outreach. The chronology developed through the individual histories provided a lens for understanding the history and development of media centers more generally, establishing the foundations for future research in this area.

### **3.3 DATA SOURCES**

One of the advantages of case study research is the researcher's ability to draw from a wide range of sources to develop each case. However, the large amount of data collected between multiple cases also presents challenges for management of the data. As such sampling is a necessary component of case study research, as researchers are not able to study every possible source of evidence within the cases. This selection was bounded by the research questions.<sup>146</sup> The following data sources were explored for this research study.

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<sup>146</sup> Ellinger, Watkins and Marsick, "Case Study Research Methods," 336.

### 3.3.1 Textual Materials

The historical research was driven from the primary source material found within each organization. Gorman and Clayton suggest a variety of typical sources including annual reports, meeting minutes, policy statements, and personnel records.<sup>147</sup> Through initial research at Pittsburgh Filmmakers, I identified several sources of primary source material, including: strategic plans, a self-published journal, class catalogs, the library catalog and database, records related to the archival collections, and a variety of promotional materials. In conducting the study I found that in two of the cases it was difficult to gain access to these archival records. In two cases, these records were not systematically collected and preserved, resulting in large gaps in the historical records maintained by each organization. In addition, records accessed for this study were often collected haphazardly and distributed among staff and members.<sup>148</sup> Each of these individuals maintained records according to their individual interests or role within the organization, leading to gaps in the documentary record.

At Pittsburgh Filmmakers I relied on the materials preserved in the library collections including *Field of Vision*, a journal published by the organization from 1976-1985, and a transcript from the Major Media Center Conference hosted by the organization in 1978. The organization's Media Relations Coordinator (described as the "keeper of the archives") also granted access to press releases (dating from 1992 to present) and a small collection of

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<sup>147</sup> Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 50.

<sup>148</sup> For example, at Pittsburgh Filmmakers the records related to the acquisition and digitization of the film *Pittsburgh* serve as an example of this haphazard collecting within the organization. A photocopied newspaper clipping from 1979 announcing the donation of *Pittsburgh* (1959) to Pittsburgh Filmmakers serves as the only acquisition record for the film. Additional documentation related to film, including an inventory of the 30,000 feet of film footage, are scattered among the drums and cans in which the film is stored.

photographs documenting some of the organization's activities. While other caches of materials were rumored to exist, I could not gain access to any additional textual records produced by the organization. The Internet Archive's Wayback machine allowed for exploration of the organization's website and historical course catalogs.

The recordkeeping practices at Termite Television were similar to those of Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Access to paper-based materials was limited, however digitized materials were available through the collective's website. Over the past few years, the collective has scanned some of the surviving records related to various exhibitions and screenings. Most of these materials can be classified as 'ephemera' – posters, flyers, and pamphlets – however; the collective has also digitized articles and other primary source materials related to a number of projects. The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine was useful in this case as well to explore the various generations of termite.org and the development of the online archive of material.

Paper Tiger Television was the outlier in terms of access to archival materials. In 2010, the collective donated their archives to the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University. Here I was able to access records from the organization's history from its founding through 2010. The donation included administrative files such as meeting agendas and minutes, grant applications, as well as flyers and other ephemera.<sup>149</sup> While collective members shared some recent emails, access to documentation from the past three years was limited.

This lack of documentation is one of the limitations of relying on historical materials. Gaps in the record must be considered when analyzing the materials and are particularly telling for this study. In many cases, it was the records with some artistic merit (photographic or illustrated materials) that had been preserved. Gorman and Clayon suggest that this lack of

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<sup>149</sup> The finding aid for the collection may be accessed through the Fales Library and Special Collections at <http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingsaids/html/fales/pttv/pttv.html>.

primary materials is a known limitation for organizational research and note that interviews with current and former employees can assist in filling these gaps in the documentary record.<sup>150</sup>

### **3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

To address this lack of primary material, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with key staff and members of each organization. Offering several advantages over written documentation and other methods of data collection, interviews supply an immediate response and afford opportunities for the exploration of topics by the interviewer and interviewee and may also assist in establishing causal links.<sup>151</sup> As such, these interviews were also opportunities to resolve ambiguities found in the written record and lead to the identification of additional informants useful for this study and future research.

The questions listed in Appendix A served as a guide for topics related to the practices within each organization related to preservation, representation, and outreach. These questions sought to gather information about the collections, the current storage conditions, collecting policies, issues of access, and general maintenance of media collections.<sup>152</sup> Other questions, developed prior to each interview, were driven by the data found in the primary source materials.

Interviews were conducted with the current administrative staff for each organization, along with other staff and volunteers working in areas of particular interest for this study. At Pittsburgh Filmmakers, interviews were conducted with the current executive director, the media relations coordinator, the library staff, as well as staff members coordinating the Film

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<sup>150</sup> Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 50.

<sup>151</sup> Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 125.

<sup>152</sup> See Appendix A, "Semi-Structured Interview Questions," 71.

Kitchen and Documentary Salon exhibition programs. As volunteer-based organizations, subjects for the interviews with the collectives were more difficult to coordinate. One of the difficulties is the fluid nature of the collectives' member-base. At Termite TV and Paper Tiger Television, I spoke with current staff, as well as founding collective members from each organization. Many of the interviews were conducted on-site allowing for a tour of the facilities and an overview of the activities related to preservation and collection at each organization.

Interview subjects included:

- *Charlie Humphrey* - Humphrey has served as the executive director of Pittsburgh Filmmakers over the last twenty-one years.
- *Carol O'Sullivan* – O'Sullivan is the Media Relations Coordinator for Pittsburgh Filmmakers and has been involved with Pittsburgh-based arts organizations over the past three decades.
- *Will Zavala* – Zavala is a faculty member at Pittsburgh Filmmakers, a documentary filmmaker, and founder of the Documentary Salon, a local film appreciation group.
- *Matthew Day* – Day is a former Pittsburgh Filmmakers employee and curator of Film Kitchen, a monthly screening venue for independently produced film and video from the Pittsburgh Region.
- *John Cantine* – Cantine is a filmmaker, Pittsburgh Filmmakers faculty member, and faculty liaison to the Pittsburgh Filmmakers Library.
- *Anula Shetty* – Shetty is the current co-director of Termite Television. Shetty joined the collective as an artist-member in 1994.
- *Michael Kuetemeyer* – Kuetemeyer is one of the founding members of the Termite Television collective as well as the current co-director of the organization.



- *Dee Dee Halleck* – Halleck is one of the founding members of the Paper Tiger Collective. While she is not currently producing work with the collective, Halleck has continued to provide financial and administrative support for the collective over the past three decades.
- *Patricia González Ramírez* – Ramírez is a current Paper Tiger Television collective member and serves as the single staff member for the organization, managing the administrative work for the collective. Ramírez also served as the project manager for the collective's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition at New York University's Fales Library and Special Collections.
- *Jack Walsh* – Walsh has served as the executive director of the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture since 2010. From 2003-2010 Walsh also served as co-director with Helen De Michiel.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. While the questions listed in Appendix A served as the foundation for each of the interviews, additional questions varied for each of the interview subjects. These additional questions were suggested by the review of archival and secondary source materials prior to each interview, as well as the responses of the subjects during each interview. Questions followed the themes identified in Appendix A: the development of collections and archives, preservation of archival materials, cataloging practices and representation of the archives, relationships with archives and other collecting institutions, and outreach activities and initiatives.

There are obvious limitations to this approach. While interviews provide an opportunity to collect rich data about practices and events, interviews are limited to the knowledge and memory of interviewees, as well as other personal biases limited by point of view. The primary

and secondary source material served as a means for resolving discrepancies between the accounts provided by each of the interviewees.

### 3.3.3 Secondary Source Materials

In addition to these primary sources, secondary literature related to each of the organization and to media arts center movement was reviewed. External publications such as newspapers and journals contain published information related to specific events or brief institutional histories of media arts centers; in some cases these pieces were authored by employees of the organizations or other key persons intimately involved with the media arts centers. Trade publications such as *Sightlines*, *Film News*, and *Film Library Quarterly*, and academic journals such as *Millennium Film Journal*, *Afterimage*, and *Cinema Journal* provided additional insight into the history of the organizations in this study and the historical development of media arts centers.<sup>153</sup> Other institutional histories, such as Robert Haller's *Crossroads: Avant-garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s*, DeeDee Halleck's *Hand-Held Visions*, and *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* supplemented the interviews and archival documentation.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> See, Lucy Fisher and Bill Judson, "Independent Film in Pittsburgh," *Millennium Film Journal* 3 (Winter/Spring 1979): 100-108. The earlier cited articles related to the development of Appalshop also demonstrate the variety of journals and trade publications that may provide additional data for this study. See, (chap. 2, note 80).

<sup>154</sup> See, DeeDee Halleck, *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002); Robert A. Haller, *Crossroads: Avant-garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2005); Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture, 2000).

### 3.3.4 Additional Data

In addition to the site visits and interviews at each of the media arts centers, additional research was conducted at The National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) in San Francisco. As the umbrella organization representing the interests of media arts centers, the history and development of NAMAC revealed some of the larger external influences related to the development of media arts centers, such as the involvement of the National Endowment for the Arts explored in the following chapter.

Like the other cases in this study this research was limited by the documentation that has been preserved by the organization. NAMAC granted access the organization's archive of publications including *Media Arts* (1983-1990), *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (1991-2009), and NAMAC's *Closer Look* publications (2001-2010), as well as the organization's applications for various National Endowment for the Arts grants (1989-present). In addition to these materials, an interview was conducted with current NAMAC director, Jack Wash to clarify the gaps in the record and gain a sense of the current aims of the organization. This additional data provided contextual information about the development of media arts centers and NAMAC, suggesting additional points of comparison across the cases selected for this study.

In addition to the research at NAMAC, additional site visits and interviews were conducted at the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) in San Francisco and Anthology Film Archives in New York City. Both organizations are members of NAMAC with formalized preservation programs. Anthology Film Archives, founded in 1969, specializes in the preservation of independent, experimental, and avant-garde media. The Archives maintains a collection of over twenty-thousand films, five-thousand videotapes, and two-thousand audio recordings, as well as a manuscript collection and library. As with many audiovisual archives,

Anthology is dedicated to the preservation of film as an art form, described in its manifesto as “the first film museum exclusively devoted to the film as an art.”<sup>155</sup> Archivist John Klacsmann provided a tour of the facilities and an introduction to Anthology’s preservation and conservation practices.

As a media arts center, BAVC provided a point of contrast to Anthology. Founded in 1976, BAVC was one of the original media arts centers funded by the National Endowment for the Arts in the late 1970s.<sup>156</sup> Like many media arts centers, BAVC is known for their support of media production, however the organization also specializes in providing preservation services for small non-profit organizations and individual artists. BAVC’s preservation program was formalized in 1994 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Noted projects include BAVC’s partnership with the Dance Heritage Coalition to create a digital repository of dance documentation and performance, the Lost Treasures program which seeks to preserve the work of Bay Area Artists, and the Quality Control Tools for Video Preservation. The media arts center also subsidizes preservation projects through the Preservation Access Program supported with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.<sup>157</sup> These additional sites provided insight into the professional standards for preservation from the perspective of audiovisual preservationists. As specialized facilities, BAVC and Anthology are situated between larger archival institutions such as the Library of Congress or UCLA Film and Television Archives and the media arts centers in this study which lack formalized archival programs. While these organizations do not appear as cases in this study, a knowledge of these practices and the support

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<sup>155</sup> Anthology Film Archives, “About/Manifesto,” accessed April 22, 2014, <http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/about/manifesto>.

<sup>156</sup> See Chapter 4 for a history of the development of the Major Media Center grants through the Endowment.

<sup>157</sup> For a full description of these projects see, “Preservation Services,” accessed April 22, 2014, <http://bavc.org/preservation/services/history>. BAVC’s historical involvement in the preservation of independent media is further discussed in Chapter 5.

that BAVC and Anthology provide for preservation of non-commercial and independent media informed my understanding of the localized practices as they have developed at Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Paper Tiger Television, and Termite TV.

### **3.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

The following chapters address the practices that have developed at three media arts centers using a cross-case analysis to draw comparisons across the cases using the identified data points. For each case the observed practices, interviews, and historical data provided a means for triangulation and resolving discrepancies between data sources. Ellinger, Watkins, and Marsick describe this inductive nature of data analysis, suggesting that with this constant comparative method, “case study researchers enter into iterative cycles of data collection, analysis of some kind, and ... use insights from the analysis to guide the next steps of data collection.”<sup>158</sup> This iterative approach was employed throughout the data collection and analysis; the primary and secondary documentation suggested questions for the interview subjects, while the interviews suggested further interrogation of the archival documentation and published materials. Data sources were interrogated for the broad themes suggested by the Semi-Structured Interview Questions (Appendix A): development of collections and archives, preservation of archival materials, cataloging practices and representation of the archives, relationships with archives and other collecting institutions, and outreach activities and initiatives.

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<sup>158</sup> Ellinger, Watkins and Marsick, “Case Study Research Methods,” 341.

Andrew Flinn's definition of community archives (discussed in Chapter 2) served as a framework for understanding the development of archival practices within each of the cases. Defined as "collections of materials gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control," the inclusiveness of Flinn's concept allowed for broad interpretation of archival functions as they were identified in each of the cases.<sup>159</sup> As community archives are defined in opposition to professional archival practices, I remained aware of my professional biases and was careful not to impose professional standards and terminology on the practices observed. The questions in Appendix A avoided professional jargon and asked the interview subjects to provide their own definition for common archival concepts and terminology. In all three cases (and in the case of NAMAC) "archives" and "preservation" were openly used terms within each organization, though not necessarily defined according to these professional standards, as this dissertation will demonstrate.

As this study investigates the practices at three media arts centers, the following chapters can only provide a limited understanding of the practices that have developed within these organizations at large. Until further research can be conducted, these cases stand as representative examples of the archival practices that may be found in media arts centers and similar organizations.

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<sup>159</sup> Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector," 60.

#### **4.0 THE MEDIA ARTS CENTER MOVEMENT**

A comprehensive history of the media arts center movement has yet to be written. While the history gleaned from this study can only begin to tell this story, the aim of this chapter is to give some sense of the cultural and political context from which the media arts center movement emerged. Like all histories, this is a complicated story with a diverse set of actors, voices, and organizations with multiple aims and motivations. The story of media arts centers intersects the histories of video art, independent film, avant-garde film movements, as well as public access movement, and government support for the arts.

Like the organizations represented in this story, the history of media arts centers and the media arts centers movement is widely distributed, existing in the memories of the participants of the movement and their personal archives, as well as in the archives of the organizations that waxed and waned over the past sixty years. Jack Wash, current director of The National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture explained that the few members of the founding generation remain and many of those who have failed to pass their knowledge to the next generation. Even this lobbying arm for the media arts field has little sense of its own history.<sup>160</sup>

Two of the key organizations to this story are the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC). The following chapter

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with the author, November 10, 2013. Walsh explained that there was a failed attempt to write a history of the organization for its Thirtieth Anniversary in 2010.

will address the history of media arts centers using the involvement of these organizations as a lens to provide a contextual framework from which media arts centers can be understood.

#### **4.1 SETTING THE STAGE: THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA**

Examples of independent or non-commercial filmmaking can be found throughout the history of film and video production. While the term ‘independent filmmaker’ is a contemporary term, many of the earliest filmmakers and inventors of the medium working in the early twentieth century, could be described as independent. French filmmakers Auguste and Louis Lumière patented their version of the cinématographe, an early motion picture film camera and projector, in 1895 and began producing actuality films to screen at fairs and music halls. The most famous of which, *L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat*, better known as the *Arrival of the Train at the Station*, is fabled for frightening first-time film goers, causing audience members to jump out of the way of the on-coming train projected on the screen. The Lumières’ controlled the means of production and distribution of their work operating similar to the way in which we define independent filmmaking today.

Early adopters like the Lumière Brothers and their contemporaries, such as Thomas Edison in the United States, controlled the means of production and distribution of their work as early inventors of moving image technology. As movie making became an industry, leading to the development of large studios on both the east and west coast, this distinction between commercial, or theatrical, film production and distribution, and independent, or non-commercial, becomes more apparent. The practices of non-commercial and amateur filmmaking continued to build throughout the early teens and twenties and into the mid-twentieth century. During this



time, amateur film technology, such as 16mm safety film and projectors, was introduced to the growing market of movie fans and cine clubs desiring to create and screen their own films or to share commercially produced films with others.<sup>161</sup>

The ‘independent filmmaker’ emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as the cost of film technology reached a point at which it was more affordable for individuals or small groups of filmmakers to purchase equipment for their own use. The terms ‘underground,’ ‘avant-garde,’ and ‘experimental’ have also been associated with non-commercial film and media production during this era. In these decades, the first videotape portapack technologies were also introduced. Much like 16mm and Super-8 film technology, these early video systems were portable and affordable, popularizing technology among independent and amateur media makers alike. Video technology also freed these makers from film labs, as videotape could be instantly reviewed and edited using the same recording apparatus.

Independent has different connotations today. This term can describe commercially successful filmmakers and artists as well as those working in the non-commercial sector. Independent in this study refers to artists working in this non-commercial sector, controlling the means of production and distribution for their work. The media arts center, the subject of this study, like ‘independent,’ is also a nebulous concept.

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<sup>161</sup> See, Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Scott MacDonald, *Art in Cinema: Documents Towards a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Jan-Christopher Horak, “The First American Avant-Garde, 1919-1945,” in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Avant-Garde 1919-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

## 4.2 MAJOR MEDIA CENTERS, REGIONAL MEDIA CENTERS, AND MACS

In the late-1960s and early-1970s the technologies of production and distribution were available to film and video artists; however, the cost of entry was still prohibitive for many media-makers.<sup>162</sup> To distribute the costs of purchasing recording, editing, and playback equipment, media artists began to form together into small collectives, purchasing equipment as a group and working together to create and distribute media. The ‘media arts center’ appeared during these decades, either growing from the smaller collectives (such as the Selma Burke Arts Center in Pittsburgh, discussed later in this chapter) or building from already established arts organizations like the Pacific Film Archive.<sup>163</sup>

Film scholar and former NAMAC board member J. Ronald Green suggests that the history of media arts centers can be traced to the founding of the Museum of Modern Art’s Film Library in 1935.<sup>164</sup> However the regular use of the term does not appear in the literature until the early 1970s. In 1973, Sheldon Renan, then director of the Pacific Film Archive, argues that this organization was the “first film facility... to be planned as a regional film resource center.”<sup>165</sup> Here the term “regional film center” is used to designate facilities that would support non-

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<sup>162</sup> In 1971, an entry-level portapack video camera/recorder would require an investment equivalent to about \$12,000 when adjusted for inflation. A single videotape, while reusable, cost about \$13 (or \$75 today), while the equivalent in 16mm film with processing was priced at approximately \$110 (or about \$600 today). These statistics were estimated from the costs reported in Michael Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

<sup>163</sup> Media arts centers appear to be a North American phenomenon. While film societies and cine clubs can be found world-wide, the media arts center nomenclature has only been referenced in relation to centers in the United States and Canada. For discussion of how the media arts center evolved in the Canadian context see, Michele L. Wozny, “National Audiovisual Preservation Initiatives and the Independent Media Arts in Canada,” *Archivaria* 67 (Spring 2009): 87-113; Clive Robertson, *Policy Matters: Administrations of Art and Culture* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006).

<sup>164</sup> J. Ronald Green, “Film and Video: An Institutional Paradigm and Some Issues of National Policy,” *Journal of Cultural Economics* 8, no. 1 (1984): 61.

<sup>165</sup> Sheldon Renan, “The Concept of Regional Film Centers,” *Sightlines* 7, no. 3 (1973/1974): 7.

commercial film production and exhibition across the United States. He suggests that this movement began in late the 1960s as organizations were founded in regions not known for film production (the Pacific Northwest, Mid-West, and New England). This initial push for the regional development of non-commercial film production centered on several key issues: the appreciation and study of film as an art form, community outreach, and the development of federal funding structures through the National Endowment for the Arts.

Renan further suggests that the concept of regional film centers is closely tied to the development of the American Film Institute (AFI).<sup>166</sup> Founded in 1967 with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the twenty-two board original AFI members identified five key priorities for the Institute: preservation of “the American Film,” audience education, professional training for filmmakers, support of production through funding opportunities, as well as the development of publications to support the study of film.<sup>167</sup> Those working within the media arts center movement also expressed a desire for the AFI to coordinate the efforts of the regional film centers developing across the United States. While the AFI would support film and video at the national level, the Institute failed to develop support mechanisms with a regional focus. The report from the 1979 National Conference of Media Arts Centers reflected this disconnect between the aims of the media arts center movement and the AFI suggesting that “the priorities and objectives of the AFI and the centers are different in many cases,” and that media

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<sup>166</sup> In its history of the development of NAMAC, the Experimental Television Center suggests that the development of media arts centers parallels the development of the AFI, placing the beginning of the media arts center movement in 1967 following the publication of the Stanford Report, the research study which called for the establishment of the AFI. “Evolution of NAMAC (1997),” <http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org/evolution-namac-1997>.

<sup>167</sup> *Annual Report Fiscal 1968* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts and National Council on the Arts, 1969): 46-47, <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-Annual-Report-1968.pdf>.

arts centers must work to fill these gaps at the regional level.<sup>168</sup> NAMAC, the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, would later fill this role as the umbrella organization for the media arts center movement and the media arts more generally.

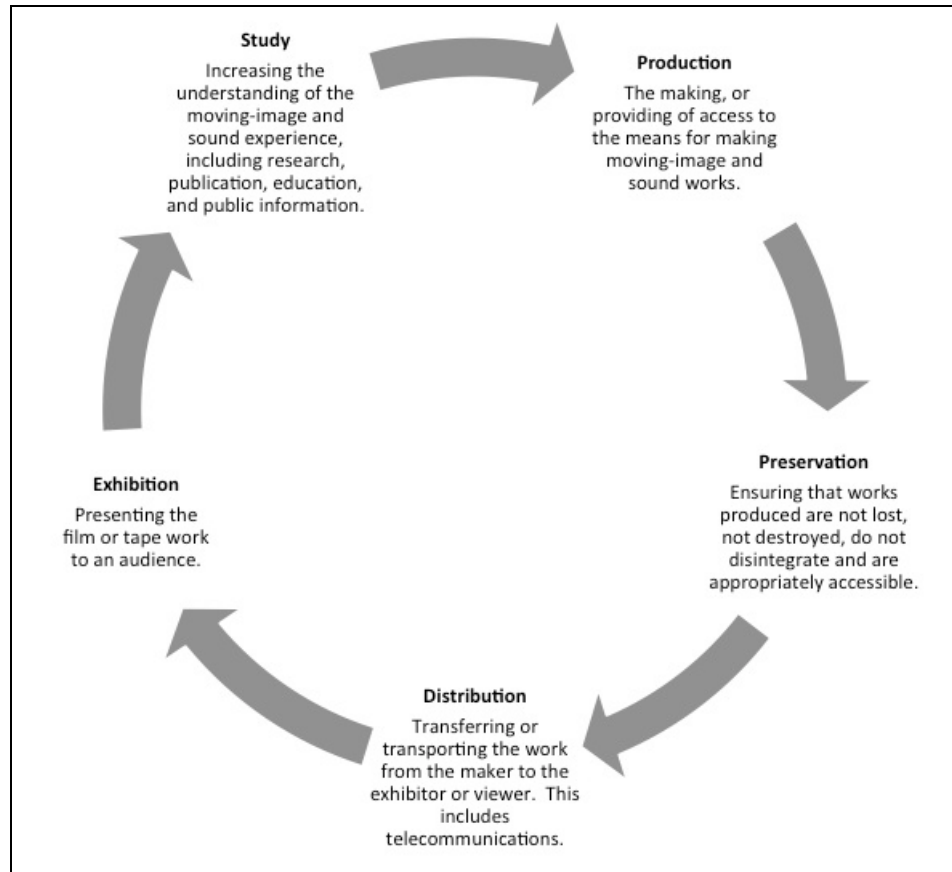
J. Ronald Green uses the term ‘regional media center’ to discuss media arts centers in his 1982 description of the variety of not-for-profit media institutions developing in the country. He again suggests the founding of the Film Library at the Museum of Modern Art as the origin of the larger grassroots movement supporting non-commercial media.<sup>169</sup> However, twenty-five years after the founding of this institution, Green reflects, “the proliferation of not-for-profit film organizations... was being pointed out in public for its variety and overall disorganization.”<sup>170</sup> This disorganization is demonstrated by the multitude of terms used to describe media arts centers, which have also been known as regional media centers, major media centers, media centers, or simply MACs. At times these terms designate large established institutions with a national focus, such as the Museum of Modern Art, but media arts centers also connote more regionally focused organizations supporting a few hundred artists as suggested by Sheldon Renan and J. Ronald Green, or even smaller artists collectives and access centers operating at a local level offering services to a few dozen members. Broadly defined, this term designates a non-profit, membership based media arts organization providing services that support the production of non-commercial media (see Figure 1).

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<sup>168</sup> Wanda Bershen, “Notes from Minnewaska: On Independence” *Field of Vision* 7 (Summer 1979): 4.

<sup>169</sup> The Film Library at Museum of Modern Art is also credited as one of the first film archives, influencing the development of the film preservation movement both in the United States and globally as a founder of FIAF, the International Federation of Film Archives. See Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (London: British Film Institute, 1994).

<sup>170</sup> J. Ronald Green, “Film and Not-for-Profit Media Institutions,” in *Film/Culture Explorations of Cinema in its Social Context*, ed. Sari Thomas (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 44.



**Figure 1.** Functions of Media Arts Centers<sup>171</sup>

Though the support of the National Endowment of the Arts and additional funding from the Rockefeller and MacArthur Foundations, the media arts centers gained momentum throughout the 1960s and 1970s, supporting the growth and development of the media arts sector in this country. Then Director of the NEA's Media Arts Program, Brian O'Doherty reported on the growth of media arts centers in the NEA's Annual Report from 1979:

A phenomenon of the [1970s], media arts centers bring works of classic and advanced media art to the public through exhibition programs, workshops, and residencies. They focus the attention of artists, critics, and public on key issues

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<sup>171</sup> Adapted from, J. Ronald Green, "Film and Video: An Institutional Paradigm and Some Issues of National Policy," *Journal of Cultural Economics* 8, no. 1 (1984): 63.

affecting our understanding of the media. And they provide a vital resource for media artists through equipment access programs and to the public through maintenance of film-video collections and publications. Increasingly, media centers are serving as centers of production; many are developing cordial relations with their local public and commercial television stations, e.g., in Buffalo, Houston, Minneapolis, Boston, New York, and Los Angeles.<sup>172</sup>

Statistics reported at the 1979 National Conference of Media Arts Centers further demonstrate the impact of media arts centers on the media arts field. Representatives of the forty-seven organizations who attended the conference, representing about one-half of the nation's media arts centers, reported that they had supported 835 appearances by film and video makers with \$170,000 in artist fees and honoraria, programed 7,450 film and video screenings to an audience of over 850,000 people and broadcast to over 2 million homes, and provided equipment to 8,000 members.<sup>173</sup> This level of activity had already captured the attention of the NEA, which began funding media arts centers in their own category within the Media Arts Program, beginning in 1978.

#### **4.3 MEDIA CENTERS AND THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was established by the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act and charged with “develop[ing] and promot[ing] a

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<sup>172</sup> Brian O'Doherty, “Media Arts: Film/Radio/Television,” in *Annual Report 1979* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 1980), 120.

<sup>173</sup> Wanda Bershen, “Notes from Minnewaska: On Independence,” *Field of Vision* 7 (Summer 1979): 4.

broadly conceived national policy of support for... the arts in the United States.”<sup>174</sup> In speaking about the aims of the newly formed federal funding arm, President Lyndon B. Johnson stated:

Government can seek to create conditions under which the arts can flourish through recognition of achievements, through helping those who seek to enlarge creative understanding, through increasing the access of our people to the works of our artists, and through recognizing the arts as part of the pursuit of American greatness.<sup>175</sup>

The NEA initially funded organizations and individuals working in the arts fields in several broadly defined categories: Architecture, Arts and Education, Costume and Fashion Design, Creative Writing, Dance, Drama, Folk Art, Music, Public Media, Variety of Art Forms, and Visual Arts, along with providing support for state arts councils and agencies.

Media arts centers were initially funded as “regional film centers” under the Public Media Program, beginning in 1972, through the Regional Development Grants which provided:

Assistance to regional organizations to help them exhibit high quality film and video art; conduct visiting artists programs; provide access to exhibition and production facilities; provide a resource for film and video research, study, and information; train regional development personnel; and integrate and coordinate media resources on a regional basis.<sup>176</sup>

Renamed in 1977, the Public Media program became the Media Arts program. In 1978 a new funding category was introduced for Major Media Centers, “to make the arts of film, video, and

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<sup>174</sup> *Annual Report 1966* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 1967), 1, <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-Annual-Report-1966.pdf>. For broader discussions of the history of NEA and federal funding for the arts see, Donna M. Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy & the National Endowment for the Arts 1965-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Joseph Wesley Zeigler, *Arts in Crisis: The National Endowment for the Arts Versus America* (Chicago: A Cappella, 1994); Livingston Biddle, *Our Government and the Arts: A Perspective from the Inside* (New York: American Council for the Arts, 1988).

<sup>175</sup> *Annual Report 1966*, 1.

<sup>176</sup> *NEA Annual Report 1977* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 1978), 74, <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-Annual-Report-1977.pdf>.

radio more widely appreciated and practiced.”<sup>177</sup> Major Media Centers here include organizations operating independently as well as those established within parent organizations, such as museums, universities, or state arts agencies. In this first round of funding fourteen organizations were granted funds totaling to \$380,500.<sup>178</sup> This represents four percent of the eight million dollars in funding allocated for the Media Arts Program this year. Funds were also allocated to:

- Programming in the Arts, for developing programming for radio or television
- Aid to Film/Video Exhibitions
- In Residence/Workshop Program, providing funding for organizations to invite media-makers for engagements
- The Endowment/CPB Joint Program, providing funding for programming on public television through the Corporation of Public Broadcasting (CPB)
- Production Aid, funding for individual projects
- Services to the Field, supporting organizations providing artist services that included many media arts centers
- General Program funding, not otherwise categorized
- And, funding for the American Film Institute in three categories:
  - Direct support for the AFI

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<sup>177</sup> *Annual Report 1978* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 1979), <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/NEA-Annual-Report-1978.pdf>.

<sup>178</sup> The organizations funded by the Major Media Center grants this first year included: Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Boston Film Video Foundation, Inc., Allston, MA; University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA; University of Colorado (for Rocky Mountain Film Center), Boulder, CO; Global Village Video Resource Center, New York, NY; Haleakala, Inc., New York, NY; Media Study, Inc., New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art Film Department, New York, NY; Northwest Film Study Center, Portland, OR; Pittsburgh Film-Makers Association, Pittsburgh, PA; South Carolina Arts Commission, Columbia, SC; Southwestern Alternate Media Project, Inc., Houston, TX; University Film Study Center, Inc., Cambridge, MA; Walker Art Center, Inc., Minneapolis, MN.



- The AFI/NEA Archival Program
- The AFI Independent Filmmaker Program, directly supporting artists.<sup>179</sup>

In 1980, the NEA renamed the funding category, using the broader and more inclusive term, “Media Arts Centers.” This funding for Media Arts Centers would continue through 1996, when the NEA restructured the entire granting program, eliminating this direct line of funding. Reflecting on the support of the NEA, Douglas Edwards, editor of NAMAC’s newsletter, credited the NEA for establishing “a solid foundation for the media arts ‘movement’ in the U.S.” and further argued, “in response to the widespread grassroots efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the NEA provided much needed recognition and funding for the young field – and was, in all probability, more responsible for the popularization of the terms ‘media arts’ and ‘media arts center’ than any other organization, group or individual.”<sup>180</sup> While the NEA provided support in these formative years of the media arts center movement, support would wax and wane over the next two decades as the media arts sector took shape under the leadership of NAMAC.

#### **4.4 NAMAC: THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF MEDIA ART-CENTERS ARTS AND CULTURE**

By 1980 the media arts center movement had gained significant momentum and media arts centers began to organize, calling for national representation that could lobby on behalf of the growing number of media arts centers across the country. NAMAC’s origins have been traced to the Conference on Regional Development of Film Centers and Services, otherwise

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<sup>179</sup> Annual Report 1978, 151-165.

<sup>180</sup> Douglas Edwards, “State of the Arts: Editor’s Note,” *Media Arts* 2, no. 4 (Spring/Summer 1989), 1.

known as the Mohonk Conference, held in February of 1973 in upstate New York. The conference was jointly sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art and the Pacific Film Archives, affiliated with the University Art Museum in Berkeley, and funded by the John and Mary Markle Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the NEA. The Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services was formed at the Monhonk Conference and charged with developing a centralized organization to support the growing film and television community in the United States.<sup>181</sup> Thirty representatives of media arts centers as well as other stakeholders in the media arts field were in attendance at this first major meeting of media arts centers, including two representatives of the NEA's Public Media Program.<sup>182</sup> Four of the twenty-five represented organizations received NEA funding in 1977 under the first round of funding for Major Media Centers.<sup>183</sup> This initial meeting was followed by a series of regional meetings charged with reviewing the report drafted by the initial conference committee. After several years of research, the Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services published the resulting report in 1977 titled, *The Independent Film Community: A Report on the Status of Independent Film in the United States*.

The report attempts first to define this 'community' of independent media artists. Suggesting that the commercial film sector may be defined as an industry as it is profit driven, the authors prefer the term community when describing the non-commercial sector, as competition for profit does not exist among independent filmmakers who are supported by non-profit organizations. 'Independent' in this sense, "implies that a single individual has primary

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<sup>181</sup> Peter Feinstein, ed., *The Independent Film Community* (New York: Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services, 1977), iii.

<sup>182</sup> See Appendix B for the full list of attendees.

<sup>183</sup> Eight of these organizations are listed as institutional members of NAMAC in the membership data from 1983-1989. See Appendix C.

and unquestioned creative control,” over their production. The report centered on the filmmaking community, not due to an oversight or bias, but because at this moment, the video community proved too elusive, escaping definition. The authors suggest that “the growth of video is so rapid that boundaries and definitions become blurred almost before they are recognized.” However, where the concerns of the growing video community overlap those of independent filmmakers, the broader term ‘moving image media’ is employed in this text.<sup>184</sup> This distinction between media would not hold in media arts centers, and in fact, many of the organizations attending this initial conference would eventually support artists working across all forms of visual media. This “multiformity” of the community, as it is described in this report, also complicates the notion of preservation, discussed in the following chapter.

The report defines the broad areas of support provided by media arts centers (distribution, funding, exhibition, preservation, and study), and concludes with recommendations and observations about the growing community in several key areas:

- The need for a public image
- The expansion of exhibition programs
- Support from government agencies
- The opposition to “Established Media Systems”
- Democratic access to the tools of media production
- The significance of video as a creative medium

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<sup>184</sup> Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*, vi-vii. A similar division along format lines will be seen in the discussion of preservation in the following chapter.

- The necessity of the development of “Archival Techniques” for media
- The future of film and media education<sup>185</sup>

Media arts centers were beginning to fulfill many of these roles, providing venues for exhibition, experimenting with and providing access to film and video technology, as well as developing preservation techniques, and supporting the study of media, but the movement would require additional support from the government, both in terms of funding and policy, if it were to succeed in the democratization of media creation. The report cites the role of the Federal Communications Commission in developing policy that supported open access across communication channels and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for developing further venues supporting the exhibition of noncommercial productions, as two key examples. However, where these governmental bodies are seen as potential collaborators, the AFI is further chastised for the apparent failure of the organization to support non-commercial production.

The authors argue that the AFI was, “primarily concerned with the celebration of the feature-film industry and has proven particularly unsuited to representing the independent film community.”<sup>186</sup> With this failure of the AFI to represent regional interests and provide support for non-commercial or independent media creators, the organizations represented at the Monhonk and media arts centers from across the country gathered in two years after the publication of *The Independent Film Community* for the 1979 Media Arts Center Conference.

This conference, like those that preceded it, concluded that regional development was required to further support the growing non-commercial media arts sector in this country.

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<sup>185</sup> Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*, 85-94.

<sup>186</sup> Feinstein, *The Independent Film Community*, 90. The 1972 publication, *The American Film Heritage*, illustrates this point. Published to celebrate the efforts of the AFI to preserve a collection of 9,000 films through the preservation funding provided by the NEA, the publication exclusively lists major commercial productions. Tom Shales and Kevin Brownlow, *The American Film Heritage: Impressions from the American Film Institute Archives* (Washington: Acropolis Books, 1972).

Attended by approximately half of the media arts centers in the United States, the final report called for cooperation among media arts centers and the federal government to provide legislation and funding to support the growing media arts field:

Media Arts Centers need and should actively seek to place representatives... on the advisory boards of the CPB [Corporation for Public Broadcasting] and PBS [Public Broadcasting Service], and could promote contact with Congressional communications sub-committees, both in Washington, through a national representative, and through in-person contacts at field hearings.<sup>187</sup>

At this time, some of these roles were filled by the representation provided by the Association for Independent Video and Film (AIVF), but those attending this meeting now felt that media arts centers, “[could] and should exert substantial political force,” with the proper national representation. Thus, NAMAC was officially formed the following year hosting its first convening, “An Alliance for the Media Arts in America,” in Boulder, Colorado. NAMAC began its first decade as the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers reflecting its outgrowth from the Media Arts Center Movement.

By 1980, media arts centers were in their third round of funding from the NEA and NAMAC now served as the national representation for this diverse and growing body of organizations supporting the media arts. In the early 1980s, NAMAC members included organizations with a national focus, such as The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and American Film Institute, state level organizations and funders, like the Ohio State Arts Council, and smaller regional or locally based organizations such as Pittsburgh Filmmakers and the Toledo Media Project.<sup>188</sup> NAMAC was serving the diverse interests of organizations that ranged from local media arts centers, university based organizations, and cultural intuitions –

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<sup>187</sup> Bershen, “Notes on Minnewaska,” 4.

<sup>188</sup> For a list of NAMAC members see Appendix C.

from major museums charged with preserving the cultural heritage of the nation to ‘scrappy upstarts’ creating experimental work in new media – serving as an umbrella organization for all organizations concerned with the media arts.

In these early years, NAMAC focused on three key functions: convening its membership at annual national conferences, providing small technical support grants to member organizations, and conducting research and advocacy in the field.<sup>189</sup> Along with the annual meetings, NAMAC began publishing the *Travel Sheet*, a newsletter distributed to all NAMAC members, describing the current work being produced and exhibited in media arts centers across the country. This publication supported the growing network of independent artists through developing touring schedules for completed works and developing audiences in the field. In 1983, the *Travel Sheet* was incorporated into *Media Arts*, a publication partially funded by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Long Beach Museum of Art. The audience for this quarterly publication included institutional and individual NAMAC members, institutions and individuals operating larger media arts field, as well as the general public. Each issue included updates and news from NAMAC and its members as well as articles related to the broader concerns of media arts centers, “programming and exhibition activities, funding, education, technology, production, preservation, history, and other aspects of film, video, audio, and intermedia arts.”<sup>190</sup> Issues related to funding and access at both the national and state levels were also regularly featured in *Media Arts*. During the 1980s, a few “anchor funders” supported the growth of media arts centers, including the NEA, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation. While these grantors established a stable funding source for some,

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<sup>189</sup> The general outline of this history was furnished by Jack Walsh, in an interview with the author October 10, 2013.

<sup>190</sup> Douglas Edwards, “From the Editor,” *Media Arts* 1, no. 1 (June/July 1983): 1.

monies from these foundations were often allocated for the same larger profile media arts centers year after year, creating pools of funding for a select few.<sup>191</sup> The same was true for individual artists who could apply for a number of grants furnished by the NEA and the AFI, however, these grants were often awarded to established artists with national reputations seeking significant funds to support their work.<sup>192</sup> To remedy this inequity, the NEA established the Regional Fellowship Program in 1982. Previously administered through the AFI, in 1982 these grants were administered by designated media arts centers. In 1984, seven regions were identified, each represented by a single media arts center.

Representatives of the NEA identified several advantages to this effort to decentralize funding for the media arts:

1. They acknowledge the geographically diverse media community.
2. They encourage the media artists to remain within their communities, rather than migrating to national centers of production.
3. They put the award-making process closer to the constituency served.
4. They showcase the administering organizations – the media arts centers.
5. They encourage the participation of private corporations and foundations which do not fund national programs.<sup>193</sup>

The fellowship program succeeded in stimulating production at the regional level, allowing the media arts centers to acknowledge and showcase media artists in their individual regions. While this was a more democratic approach to allocating funding,

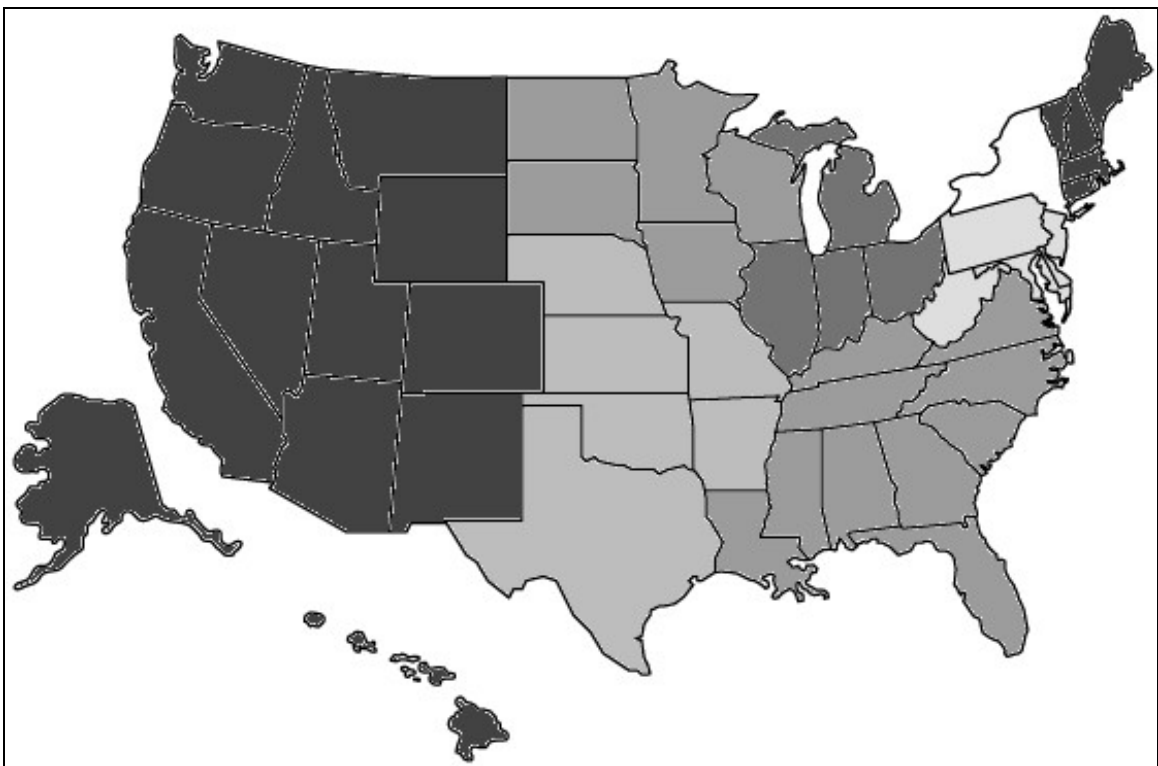
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<sup>191</sup> Jack Walsh (NAMAC director), interview with the author, November 10, 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Susie King, "Update: The Regional Media Arts Fellowship Program," *Media Arts* 1, no. 5 (April/May 1984): 6-7.

<sup>193</sup> King, "Update: The Regional Media Arts Fellowship Program," 6.

some regions were disproportionally represented, as Figure 2 demonstrates.<sup>194</sup> Media arts centers in the Central Mid-West and Mid-Atlantic supported fewer than six states, while funding designated to the Rocky Mountain Film Center in the Western Region was divided among fifteen. Each region received the same award from the NEA to be distributed across the constituency (in 1984 each designated media arts center received an award of \$45,000).



**Figure 2.** NEA Regional Fellowship Distribution by Region, 1984<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Regions as defined in King, "Update: The Regional Media Arts Fellowship Program," 7.

<sup>195</sup> The NEA fellowships were distributed by seven media arts centers, as follows: Center for New Television (Chicago, IL) for the Central Mid-West; Pittsburgh Filmmakers for the Mid-Atlantic; The Boston/Film Video Foundation for New England; Appalshop (Whitesburg, Kentucky) for the Southeast; Southwest Alternate Media Project (Houston, TX) for the Southwest and Caribbean; Film in the Cities (St. Paul, MN) for the Upper Mid-West, and Rocky Mountain Film Center (University of Colorado) for the West and Pacific Territories.



In 1984, NAMAC announced a second regranting program, the Management Assistance Grants also funded by the NEA. Instead of focusing on the work of the individual artist, this program aimed to support the “growth and development,” of media arts organizations “by implementing concreted management initiatives which will move these groups towards increased long-term stability.”<sup>196</sup> The grants furthered the aims of the media arts center movement by providing monetary assistance for the development of individual organizations, and by designating media arts centers as the regranting organizations. This theme of decentralized of funding would continue through the 1990s, as the NEA began to cut the number of small grants (less than \$5,000) it administered to small media arts organizations and individual artists.

The 1990s brought number of other changes for NAMAC and the media arts field. In 1991, the relationship with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science dissolved and *Media Arts* became *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network*. During this time the larger established media centers such as the long-term co-publishers of *Media Arts*, the Long Beach Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art (New York) began to break their association with NAMAC. Many of these organizations represented museums and other cultural institutions with larger support networks and interests outside of the media arts. However, this loss of larger media arts centers and organizations made way for a growing constituency of smaller media arts organizations, a demographic that would continue to grow within NAMAC’s membership. The model of the media arts center, as it was envisioned decades earlier, was also in decline. While many media arts centers continued to thrive, NAMAC became the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, recognizing the diversity of non-profit media organizations that NAMAC was now serving.

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<sup>196</sup> “NAMAC Announces Management Assistance Grant Awards,” *Media Arts* 1, no. 5 (April/May 1984): 3.

While this decade marked a growth in the media arts sector, these years would also prove challenging for NAMAC. The National Endowment for the Arts continued to modify their funding structure throughout the 1990s and eliminated the specific line of funding for Media Arts Centers in 1997 after almost two decades of support. The Media Arts Fund, NAMAC's regranteeing program through the NEA, was eliminated a few years prior.

The NEA's Media Arts Program director and long-time supporter of NAMAC and the media arts center movement, Brian O'Doherty would also leave the NEA in 1996. These funding cuts were felt deeply by media arts organizations that had identified the NEA as one of "the most influential and important funders" in the media arts field.<sup>197</sup> The NEA's Media Arts Centers funding category was credited with helping to legitimize the media arts center movement among organizations in the wider arts fields. Some organizations funded in this category reported that their organizations adapted to fit the media arts center model in order to qualify for this funding from the NEA. Those receiving funding at this federal level also suggested that the prestige of receiving an NEA grant helped to attract further funding at the state and local levels.<sup>198</sup>

These changes were felt across all of the funding programs in the NEA, not only the Media Arts. While the NEA had sustained a series of modest budget cuts from the federal government in the earlier half of this decade, 1996 brought with it the most drastic cuts leading to the wholesale restructuring of the granting program. The seventeen discipline-based programs, which included the Media Arts Program, were replaced by four funding categories: Heritage and Preservation, Education and Access, Creation and Presentation, Planning and Stabilization. Over the next three years, grants to individual artists were eliminated, with the

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<sup>197</sup> Helen De Michiel, "Brian O'Doherty Leaves NEA," *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (November/December 1996): 8.

<sup>198</sup> Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *The Bottom Line: Funding For Media Arts Organizations* (San Francisco: National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, 1991), 18.

exception of established fellowship programs in literature, jazz, and folk and traditional arts. All re-granting programs and operational support grants to organizations were also terminated.<sup>199</sup>

These funding cuts reflect the larger tumultuous political climate during the Culture Wars. During the 1990s the NEA and the arts in general were under attack by the political Right, and attempts were made to completely defund the organization. The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies also reported a twenty-six percent decrease in the available funding for the arts, citing the budget cuts as the “largest decline in 23 years.”<sup>200</sup> The attacks against the NEA and other public funding sources for the arts can be seen throughout NAMAC’s newsletter during this decade (see, “Helms Attacks NEA” on the following page). For example, in 1992 NEA grants for the Gay and Lesbian Media Coalition and the Pittsburgh International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival were rejected. The ruling was overturned for the 1993 funding cycle, but the affect on the media arts field was chilling.<sup>201</sup> In 1997, the NEA declined funding for Canyon Cinema’s catalog suggesting that, “absent any artistically-based selection process or editorial mechanism, the Endowment cannot rely upon the artist excellence or merit of the material included.”<sup>202</sup> The independent film distributor had received NEA funding for the printing of its distribution catalog for the past fifteen years. Other artists and media arts centers came under

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<sup>199</sup> Mark Bauerlein, ed., *National Endowment for the Arts: A History 1965-2008* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2009), 119-120.

<sup>200</sup> “NASSAA Estimates 26% Decrease in Funding to State Art Agencies by 1992,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (October 1991): 3.

<sup>201</sup> See, Julian Low, “Looking Back at 1993,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (December 1993): 1, 8.

<sup>202</sup> “Vanity Press?,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (Spring 1997): 10-11.

attack in these years, but those producing “subject matter relating to gay, lesbian and female sexuality,” were specifically targeted for investigation.<sup>203</sup>

### **Helms Attacks NEA**

On September 19, 1991, the Senate passed an amendment to the FY92 Interior Appropriations Bill which would restrict the NEA from funding works which: “...may be used to promote, disseminate or produce materials that depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual or excretory activities or organs.” The Amendment authored by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, passed in the Senate 68 to 28. Attempts were also made by Helms to force the NEA to shift \$64.6 million (50% of its budget) to state arts councils throughout the country, stating that the “elitist” policies of the NEA have shortchanged many individual states by “funneling most of the money to big cities, which then use the funds to impose their liberal morality, homosexual lifestyles, and a distorted culture on the rest of the country.” These attempts failed when Helms could not muster up the votes to table discussion.

The Appropriations Bill now heads to conference where an effort will be made to remove the Helms language. There is also a difference of budget size approved by each chamber of Congress which needs to be reconciled – the House having previously approved a budget of \$177.7 million for the NEA (attempts were made by Congressman William Dannemayer of California to attach a similar restrictive amendment, but failed, through only by nine votes), \$3 million more than the Senate’s approved budget.

Conferees from both the House and the Senate are expected to meet beginning October 3, to attempt to work out the differences between the two chambers’ versions of the Bill. If you haven’t already done so, you need to be contracting your Senators and Representatives to let them know your view on the necessity of unrestricted federal funding of the arts. The number for the Congressional Switchboard is (202)224-3121. Make an announcement about this current crisis at your organization’s nightly events or in your publications/flyers/calendars and keep abreast of the discussion (particularly if the restrictive content amendment is not removed) so that we as a national community can regain the upper hand in the fight for our Constitutional rights.

- *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (October 1991): 1.

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<sup>203</sup> “Congressional Subcommittee Investigating Artists and Organizations: Chair Rep. Hoekstra (R-MI) Leading New Attacks on the NEA,” *MAIN Media Arts Information Network* (Spring 1997): 10-11. This report, reprinted from the *National Campaign for Freedom of Expression Quarterly* (Spring 1997), lists 17 organizations and 13 artists targeted by the congressional subcommittee, including: Women Make Movies (NYC), Fiction Collective 2 (Normal, IL), Canyon Cinema (San Francisco), Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center (Buffalo), Brava! Women for the Arts (San Francisco), Upstate Films (Rhinebeck, NY), New York Foundation for the Arts, Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston), Whitney Museum of Art, Woolly Mammoth Theater Company (Washington, DC), Franklin Furnace Archive (NYC), DIA Center for the Arts (NYC), 911 Media Arts Center (Seattle), Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, Highways Performance Space (Santa Monica), Phoenix Art Museum.

Members of NAMAC remained optimistic during this decade and dedicated to their mission of representing and supporting media arts organizations. Director Jullian Lowe reflected, “while others are starting to learn to live lean and mean, lean and mean has always been our norm and now we’re just plain mean.” He further observed:

we’ve been fighting a cultural war for the past five years. In truth, we’ve been fighting a cultural war for much longer than that. The battles have been labor struggles, civil rights movements, suffrage campaigns, and much more. Artists have always been part of these battles, although art history may not always reflect that fact. We need to re-claim this history both as artists and arts organizations.<sup>204</sup>

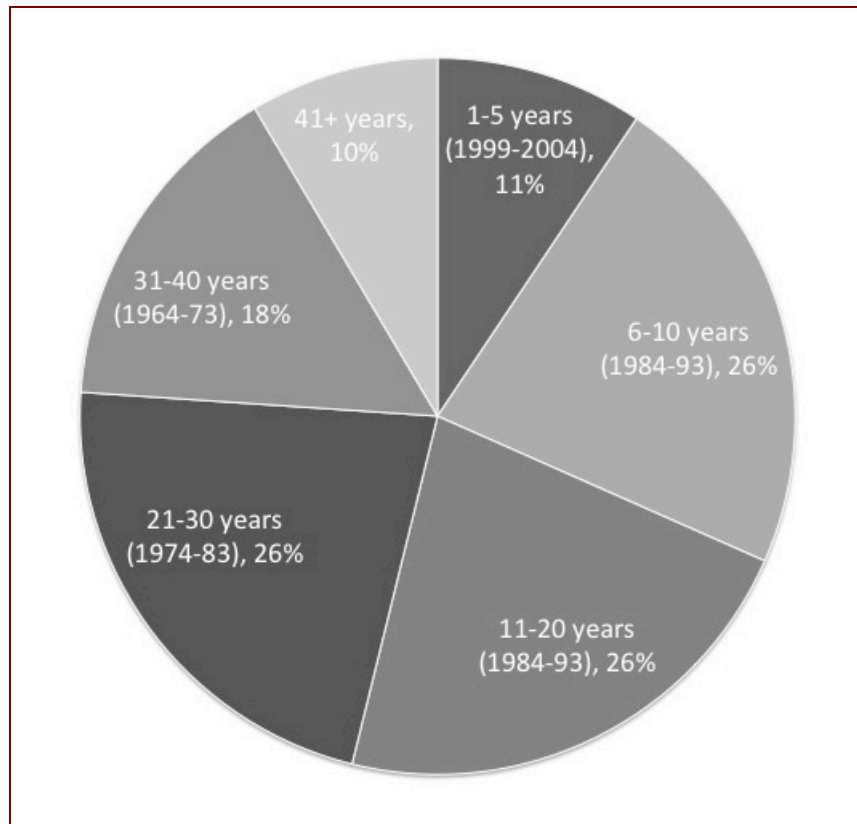
Lowe’s comments reflect the resilience and endurance of the media arts field. While the following decade would bring with it more challenges and roadblocks, NAMAC would continue to adapt to the changing political and technological climate at the turn of the twenty-first century.

With the burst of the “dot com bubble” and the economic collapse in 2008, NEA funding would not return to pre-1990s levels. Jack Walsh, current director of NAMAC, suggested that this economic climate necessitated change in organizational structure for those in the media arts field, resulting in a decline of the physical center (media arts center) and the growth of smaller media arts organizations. With the proliferation of the web and the dropping cost of media production technology, access to equipment was no longer as important as it was decades before; anyone with access to a cell phone and a computer has the ability to create and distribute the media they produce. This is not to say that the media arts center has disappeared. According to statistics from 2004, twenty-eight percent of NAMAC’s membership was founded prior to 1973 during the formative years of the Media Arts Center Movement (see Figure 3). These

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<sup>204</sup> Jullian Lowe, “Rewiring Our Networks,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (April 1993): 1.

organizations have continued to persist by adapting and changing with the availability of funding as well as the changes in media technology over the past six decades.<sup>205</sup>



**Figure 3.** How Old Are We?: NAMAC Member Organizations by Founding Date<sup>206</sup>

Despite these changes NAMAC’s role in the media arts field remains similar to its goals in the 1980s: hosting national conferences, conducting research and advocacy in the field, and providing general support to media arts organizations. This support is now provided through Leadership Grants and Regional Leadership Institutes designed to “foster and fortify the culture

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<sup>205</sup> Further discussion of the relationship of media centers and media technology will follow in Chapter 6.

<sup>206</sup> Reproduced from MAIN: Media Arts Information Network (Summer 2004): 15.

and business of independent media arts,” in an attempt to build a stronger media arts field.<sup>207</sup> The organization has also developed a series of publications titled *A Closer Look*, first published in 2000 under the leadership of Helen De Michiel, presenting case studies of member organizations which highlight leadership and management skills.

While NAMAC has attempted to strengthen the field through assisting with the development of individual organizations, the organization has also continued to survey and define the boundaries of the media arts field. Launched in 2010, *Mapping the Field* is a longitudinal study aimed at gathering empirical data about the media art field. The study is not limited to NAMAC members, but rather surveys the entire media arts field in an attempt to assess the impact of non-commercial media, collecting data related to: organizational budgets, revenue streams, and organizational activities.<sup>208</sup> Now in its second round of data collection, *Mapping the Field* has, “illuminat[ed] for the first time an independent media arts field made up of larger and more established organizations than previously known.”<sup>209</sup> The cases selected for this study represent this diversity across the media arts field as well as the complexity of the history of the development of the Media Arts Movement in the United States.

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<sup>207</sup> “About NAMAC” <http://www.namac.org/about-namac>.

<sup>208</sup> “Mapping the Field,” <http://www.namac.org/mapping>.

<sup>209</sup> Tom Borup, Lucas Erikson, and Linda Picon, *National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture Mapping the Media Arts Field Report* (San Francisco: National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture, 2013) <http://namac.org/sites/default/files/NAMACMappingtheField2013ExecutiveSummary.pdf>.

#### 4.5 FILMMAKERS, PAPER TIGERS, AND TERMITES: A CASE HISTORY FOR MACS

The cases explored in the following chapters intersect this history at varying points. Pittsburgh Filmmakers serves as the paradigm case for the media arts center model.<sup>210</sup> Established in 1971, the organization was an active organization in the media arts center movement, hosting the 1978 Major Media Center Conference, one of the regional conferences following the 1973 Monhonk Conference, and was among the first recipients of the NEA's Major Media Center Grants. Pittsburgh Filmmakers also served as the NEA's representative for the Mid-Atlantic Region administering grants through the Regional Fellowship Program through 1996. As an active NAMAC member, Pittsburgh Filmmakers also hosted the 1998 NAMAC Conference, *Media Generation: What Works to What's Next*.

Pittsburgh Filmmakers has weathered the past forty-three years as a traditional media arts center by emphasizing its commitment to media arts education and partnering with local colleges and universities earning income by offering for-credit courses. From its roots as an artist co-op at the Selma Burke Arts center in the early 1970s, Pittsburgh Filmmakers remains dedicated to supporting the individual artist, whether affiliated with the educational programs or working independently from the Pittsburgh Filmmakers facility. Pittsburgh Filmmakers remains a membership driven organization, with the executive director reporting to voting artist members.

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<sup>210</sup> Described as such by J. Ronald Green who argued, "Pittsburgh Film-Makers is a paradigm case history of growth from an original exclusive concern in 1971 for film production, through progressive relations with film study and exhibition, then preservation, distribution, and funding." J. Ronald Green, "Film and Not-for-Profit Media Institutions," in *Film/Culture Explorations of Cinema in its Social Context*, ed. Sari Thomas (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 47.



The media arts center remains dedicated to providing the breath of services for artists that were described by the early advocates for the media arts center model.<sup>211</sup>

Paper Tiger Television and Termite TV represent the smaller media arts organizations represented within NAMAC. Both organizations break from the traditional media arts center model, operating as media collectives. Whereas Pittsburgh Filmmakers is supported by individual artist members who pay fees to access equipment and facilities, Paper Tiger and Termite TV are project driven and seek funding for the development of programming to be broadcast on the web or through local cable access channels. In these two examples, artists work together to develop, produce, distribute, and exhibit works collectively, with the final products belonging to the collective and not the individual. While each of these organizations rent common space and share common equipment, collective members do not pay a fee, but rather donate their time to the organization.

While they represent a break from the traditional media arts center model, these collectives support the creation, distribution, exhibition, and preservation of media, but serve a smaller constituency of artists. Emerging in 1981 and 1992 respectively, Paper Tiger and Termite TV developed during leaner funding times, when established organizations had developed relationships with large funders and as some lines of funding for media arts centers were disappearing. Both organizations operate on ‘micro-budgets,’ receiving project based funding

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<sup>211</sup> For a detailed history of the development of the organization see, Robert A. Haller, *Crossroads: Avant-garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2005).

from state arts organizations and individual donations.<sup>212</sup> The differences between these cases and their placement along the timeline of the development of media arts centers provide points of contrast throughout this study.

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

Independent media creators are not in fact independent, as this history of media arts centers had demonstrated. As J. Ronald Green observed:

the dependence of independent filmmakers on multi-system institutions, and their interdependence among themselves, is realized, perhaps unwittingly and often unwillingly, through their own necessary cooperative practices. Thus the ‘independent’ filmmakers were independent of commercial institutions, but not of their own not-for-profit (or profit) institutions, or of each other.<sup>213</sup>

As this history has demonstrated, media arts centers emerged as a network of interdependent organizations driven by a common desire to support the development of media arts in the United States. Despite the desire of media arts centers to remain independent entities, financial support from the NEA and other large funders was key to the development of this network. The wax and wane of funding and the shifts in political attitudes towards the arts shaped the development of media arts centers and the types of support they provided to artists

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<sup>212</sup> Michael Kuetemeyer (Termite Television Collective Founder), interview with the author, August 8, 2013.; and Patricia González Ramírez (Paper Tiger Television Administrator), interview with the author, September 26, 2013. Paper Tiger Television currently operates on a budget of approximately \$30,000 per year. This small sum supports the production, rent and utilities, and a single part-time staff position. The Termite TV operates on a similar budget, however in lieu of staff collective members serving on the board take on the administrative duties for the organization.

<sup>213</sup> Green, "Film and Not-for-Profit Media Institutions," 47.

and communities. Though, media arts centers remained dedicated to providing a full range of services from production, to distribution, to preservation.

This history represents an alternate, and previously unexplored view of the development of audiovisual archives in the United States. Many of these same funding mechanisms and governmental organizations supported and influenced the development of audiovisual archives in the decades prior to the media arts center movement.<sup>214</sup> The history of media arts centers can be placed alongside the development of other preservation movements in the United States, a movement that was driven by the creators rather than the collectors of media.

This is only a partial history, aspects of this story have yet to be explored and uncovered in the records and memories of the media arts centers that remain. While the linear history presented here traces the history of the media arts center movement through the lens of NAMAC and the NEA, in reality this history, like all histories, is not so neatly packaged. As this chapter has illustrated, ‘media arts centers’ and the ‘media arts’ are not clearly defined, and as such the larger history contains many stop-and-starts, blind corners, and dead ends. It is the complexity of the media arts that is the strength of the field, as former NAMAC co-director Helen De Michiel observed:

But I’m not worried that this is no static definition of the media arts. The field is more expansive, more fluid, and more about real engagement across participatory boards than ever before. We are artists making film, digital, audio, and broadcast work. We are activists working on legislative and reform policies to protect our public media. We are educators teaching people of all ages how to create and think about communications as a shared dialogue. And we are entrepreneurs building organizations and new business models to support experimentation

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<sup>214</sup> The influence of the National Film Preservation Board, the American Film Institute, and preservation funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and National Film Preservation Board have been explored in Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

throughout the motion media environment.<sup>215</sup>

The following chapters will continue to explore media arts centers as a phenomenon, specifically focused on issues related to archives and archival work as they arise in the each of the cases. As a cross-section of media arts centers, these cases represent the diversity of organizations working under the umbrella of NAMAC. The practices developed within these multifarious organizations provide an opportunity to explore archival work in a different light, through the culture of different communities of practice and creative cultures that do not fit cleanly into any particular category, especially not as archives.

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<sup>215</sup> Helen De Michiel, "Taking a Positive Inventory: The Media Arts Movement 2008," *NAMAC Newsletter* (Winter/Spring 2008): 3.

## 5.0 PRESERVATION IN MEDIA ARTS CENTERS

*Cinema – or, if one prefers, the motion pictures – is like a big tree with many branches. The Hollywood movie is only one of the branches of this huge tree. There are other equally green branches: the branch of the documentary film; the branch of the avantgarde or poetic film; the branch of the home movie and the anthropological film; etc. This multi-branched nature of cinema shouldn't be forgotten when we talk about preservation of our moving image heritage.*<sup>216</sup>

*We in the video field are in a sort of twilight zone. We're not totally accepted by the art world – where we got our beginnings – and, on the other hand, a lot of film people are resistant to video.*<sup>217</sup>

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the media arts field is not well defined. Media arts is a broad term encompassing all forms of media production, including film, video, television, radio, and other forms of digital or 'new media.' As the cases selected for this study demonstrate, media arts centers take a variety of different organizational structures and operate with differing philosophies on the aims of media production, although they are generally non-profit, member driven organizations concerned with supporting artists in the production of media. Audiovisual archivist, Ray Edmondson suggests that the field of practice responsible for the preservation of this media, audiovisual archiving also has an "internal plurality and diversity" among the institutions and individuals who practice in this field.<sup>218</sup> Audiovisual, like

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<sup>216</sup> Jonas Mekas, Anthology Film Archives, "National Film Preservation Study Written Submissions" <http://www.loc.gov/film/pdfs/fanthology.pdf>.

<sup>217</sup> Video artist Bill Viola, as quoted in Ric Robertson, "The Grand MoMA of Media Arts Centers Begins Its Second Fifty Years," *Media Arts* 1, no. 6 (Summer 1984): 13.

<sup>218</sup> Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles* (Paris: UNESCO, 2004), 5.

media arts, is an all-encompassing term that includes all time-based or moving image media, such as film, video, television, audio recordings, as well as digital forms of expression.<sup>219</sup> Audiovisual archives can be for-profit or non-profit, privately owned or government sponsored, free-standing organizations or departments within larger institutions, and represent variety of organizational structures, including: broadcasting archives, programming archives or cinemathèques, audiovisual museums, academic archives, special collections, studio archives, and stock footage libraries.

While Edmondson argues that a single philosophy drives the practice of audiovisual archiving as a distinct academic discipline, archival scholar Karen Gracy has demonstrated that within the field, ‘preservation’ is a pluralized concept, defined within the context of the varying institutions serving as custodians for audiovisual media.<sup>220</sup> Edmondson defines preservation as the “totality of things necessary to ensure permanent accessibility – forever – of an audiovisual document with the maximum integrity.”<sup>221</sup> Edmondson’s definition refers to “a great many processes, principles, attitudes, facilities, and activities,” while “maximum integrity” is not clearly defined. These processes can include conservation, restoration, reconstruction, copying, recreation, and emulation.<sup>222</sup> The definition of each of these concepts too, may be redefined within different institutional contexts.

Gracy defines preservation as “the multiple processes, both physical and intellectual, that are used by archives and libraries to maintain access to a film: collection, physical preservation

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<sup>219</sup> Edmondson suggests audiovisual implies, media “directed at the facilities of seeing and hearing.” Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*, 6.

<sup>220</sup> Gracy’s 2007 ethnographic study surveyed the practice of preservation within several film archives. Karen Gracy, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007).

<sup>221</sup> Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*, 20

<sup>222</sup> The practice of restoration is explored in Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

techniques, cataloging, transfer to film and video, and exhibition.”<sup>223</sup> This definition again, suggests a plurality of practices that support the preservation of film and video. Preservation in this definition includes both the activities related to prolonging the life of the physical medium as well as those actions taken to provide continue access to such material.

Archives serving as custodians of records both paper-based records and audiovisual media must balance preservation and access. Materials are housed in chemically inert archival enclosures and placed in climate-controlled storage on specialized shelving. While the materials are preserved in this manner to ensure their longevity and to provide continued access, access becomes a risk for materials. Researchers may purposefully or inadvertently damage materials through use, tearing or marking materials in reading room or by simply handling documents and introducing oils and contaminants from their skin. Light, heat, humidity, and environmental pollutants all pose risks to archival materials regardless of format, but the mechanical nature of audiovisual materials makes access to these records particularly precarious.

Physical audiovisual media share a hardware/software relationship with the technology for production and for playback. While it is possible to inspect a film element without projecting the images, to recreate the illusion of movement and sound a film must be fed through a projector and introduced to heat, light, and the possibility of mechanical damage as it moves through the projector. This hardware/software relationship is more pronounced with videotape materials. The strip of magnetic tape carries a signal that can only be translated by the playback hardware. Further, because the information on the tape cannot be read without the aid of the playback technology, it is often difficult to determine if the signal is damaged. Obvious physical

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<sup>223</sup> Gracy, *Film Preservation*, 22.

damage to the tape or the housing can indicate some signal loss, but in most cases the media must be played back to be inspected for evidence of signal loss or decay.

The chemical makeup of audiovisual media presents further archival challenges. Unlike paper materials that are stable at room temperature, audiovisual media requires specialized storage near freezing temperatures to prolong the life of the material in archival terms. The first film-stocks, manufactured on nitrate-based plastics, are notoriously known for their flammability, but also degrade in process that leads to image loss if not stored in a stable environment at the freezing point. Acetate-based film or “safety-film” was manufactured as an alternative, but is also chemically unstable. Like nitrate stock, acetate-based film will shrink and warp over time if not stored in similarly cold environments. The organic dyes in color film, regardless of film base will fade over time. Magnetic media is similarly susceptible to degradation at without cold storage and suffers from binder degradation known as ‘stick-shed syndrome’ in particularly humid environments.

What does this mean for audiovisual archivists? Preservation in the audiovisual archival context means storing materials in a cold and stable environment, which leave such materials inaccessible to users. Reformatting or copying the materials onto stable formats is the only solution for continued access to the material over time. This is where the concepts of restoration and conservation become entangled with preservation in relation to audiovisual materials.

In the archival field, preservation brings to mind such terms as immutability, integrity, and fixity, a concept that is closely tied to the concept of a single, original, archival document. Preservation in this context describes “the act of keeping from harm, injury, decay, or



deconstruction, especially through noninvasive treatment.”<sup>224</sup> In other words, the rehousing of archival materials into specialized folders and boxes and placing those items into a controlled preservation environment. This passive process of preservation is distinguished from conservation and restoration which imply the more active processes of repairing damaged materials and returning the item to some idealized ‘original form.’

Leo Enticknap addresses this distinction between the practices of preservation and restoration, suggesting:

preservation is essentially a passive process. In the case of an archival institution that uses a passive conservation model, this can consist of little more than the rudimentary technical examination of a film element (to determine if there is any imminent risk of content loss, primarily through decomposition), and then putting it in a vault with the temperature and humidity optimised for the long-term storage of that particular film base and emulsion combination.<sup>225</sup>

Here preservation is described as “passive conservation,” that is, conducting a basic inspection and placing the item into cold storage. This process, Enticknap argues assumes that the material will not be accessed in the near future. For access, he describes an intermediary “technical preservation” which includes the creation of access copies, a determination of copyright, and the other steps to describe and provide access to the materials. Restoration is describes as part of this active preservation process that results in the creation of surrogates of the original elements for access:

restoration refers to one or a combination of processes of technical intervention, intended to create a copy of the content of a film from elements acquired by an

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<sup>224</sup> *A Glossary of Archival & Records Terminology*, comp. Richard Pearce-Moses (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), s.v “preservation.”

<sup>225</sup> Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 128.

archive, which more closely recreates aesthetic characteristics of that content which were known to exist at some point in the past, but which are not present in the surviving elements.<sup>226</sup>

Restoration may be limited to the aesthetic qualities such as the restoration of color values in faded elements, or may result in the complete reconstruction of film from fragmented elements.<sup>227</sup> Karen Gracy's study of the film preservation process reveals that in practice, "preservation" includes this entire continuum of processes from passive to active including the "intervention and remedy" associated with restoration and reconstruction.<sup>228</sup> The National Film Preservation Board reinforced these definitions in *Film Preservation 1993*, suggesting that preservation indicates that film is "viewable in its original format with its full visual and aural values retained" and "protected for the future by 'preprint' material through which subsequent viewing copies can be created."<sup>229</sup> This definition from the National Film Preservation Board suggests that a film is not preserved unless it is available in its original format, or that the content has been transferred to new film elements.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Enticknap, *Film Restoration*, 185.

<sup>227</sup> See, Lindsay Kistler Mattock, "From Film Restoration to Digital Emulation: The Archival Code of Ethics in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *Journal of Information Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2010): 74-85.

<sup>228</sup> Gracy, *Film Preservation*, 116. See "Chapter 6: Documenting the Process of Film Preservation" for a complete description of the preservation process.

<sup>229</sup> Annette Melville and Scott Simmon, *Film Preservation 1993: A Study of the Current State of Film Preservation* (Washington D.C.: National Film Preservation Board, 1993), <http://www.loc.gov/film/study.html>.

<sup>230</sup> The International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP) reinforces this definition of preservation, arguing that "When providing access to material by programming, projection or other means, archives will seek to achieve the closest possible approximation to the original viewing experience." FIAP does give some leeway when choosing a preservation medium, acknowledging that archivists are limited by the "technical possibilities available," but emphasizes that the, "new preservation copies shall be an accurate replica of the source material." The Code of Ethics also suggests that archives should strive to continue to provide access to nitrate elements when it is possible to do so. International Federation of Film Archives, "Code of Ethics," accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/members/ethics.html>. However, the practicality of film-to-film transfers as the preferred preservation intervention is now questionable as commercial studios retool to digital formats and film manufactures discontinue the production of film in response.

Unlike film, preservation (copy and transfer) on the original media was never a strategy for video. Since the introduction of video recording in the 1950s, each new generation of videotape has improved recording quality and image resolution, but has introduced a host of new technology for recording and playback. Unlike the film industry which has standardized a handful of film formats, videotape formats include dozens of open-reel and cassette formats encoded with both analog and digital information.<sup>231</sup> Combined with the preservation concerns for the physical tapes, the obsolescence of formats also restricts access to and preservation of these materials. As such, the only preservation strategy for video formats is migration. Whereas film preservation is focused on the end-product, video preservation is an ongoing process as suggested in *Television and Video Preservation 1997*:

The preservation of videotape itself may not be the real archival issue compared to that of format obsolescence. In this context video preservation is not an end product but a process of archival management that requires re-formatting and copies, and quality control.<sup>232</sup>

The reproduction of a surrogate that reflect the original intent of the creator in terms of informational content and aesthetic values remains central to the process of preservation and restoration for all audiovisual materials, regardless of medium, but the original carrier is thought to have little value in the case of videotape.

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<sup>231</sup> See Jim Wheeler, *Videotape Preservation Handbook* (Jim Wheeler, 2002) <http://www.amianet.org/resources/guides/WheelerVideo.pdf>.

<sup>232</sup> William Thomas Murphy, *Television and Video Preservation 1997: A Report on the Current State of American Television and Video Preservation* (Washington D.C.: National Film Preservation Board, 1997), <http://www.loc.gov/film/pdfs/tvstudy.pdf>.

## 5.1 PRESERVATION INDEPENDENCE

*...the 1992 National Film Preservation Act directed the Library of Congress to conduct “a national study on the state of American film preservation” and “to coordinate preservation efforts among studios and archives.” While there has been talk of bringing a ‘fresh’ approach to the lack of any effective national plan, even a cursory review of the issues and players suggests that what we represent as a community is very likely to be marginalized once again. ...**What assurance is there that this is not simply another means to rewrite history according to the status quo?***<sup>233</sup>

The practice of preservation as it has been defined here, is from the perspective of audiovisual archives. These definitions closely align with the concepts of preservation as it has been defined by the National Film Preservation Board in its studies of the audiovisual archival field – *Film Preservation 1993* and *Television and Videotape Preservation 1997*. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, these reports set the standards and priorities for preservation in the United States and stand as the only extensive surveys of audiovisual archival practices in the US to date.<sup>234</sup> But these are the standards of preservation as articulated by the professional archives and studios; independent media creators are named in this report, but represent a minority voice in the conversations. As the quote at the beginning of this section illustrates there was a concern within the media arts centers regarding the priorities defined by the Library of Congress and National Film Preservation Board in these reports.

As *Film Preservation 1993* illustrates, the preservation of nitrate film became an early priority for film archives. However, nitrate decay was not a concern for independent producers

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<sup>233</sup> Margaret Byrne, “Conference Report on ‘Preservation,’” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* October/November 1994: 21. Emphasis added. Byrne was the director of NAMID, the National Moving Image Database, an online Union Catalog for Moving Image Collections developed by the American Film Institute developed in the 1990s.

<sup>234</sup> The *Digital Dilemma* report from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences provide insight into contemporary practices in archives and commercial production venues, but did not have the same scope as the earlier reports from the National Film Preservation Board. A more detailed discussion of these reports can be found in Chapters 1 and 2.

who utilized 16mm and 8mm film stocks which were never produced on nitrate stock, rather these films were manufactured on “safety film” or acetate-based film stock. The larger concern for independents is the preservation of video, which is at greater risk of obsolescence. While the reports from the National Film Preservation Board evidence of the failure of the archival field to meet the needs of independent media creators, this fact was recognized decades earlier by the active voices in the media arts center movement:

In the past there has been sizable support for film preservation, particularly nitrate deterioration. The programs of the National Endowment for the Arts have really been the backbone of the nitrate preservation effort, administered by the American Film Institute and now by the National Center for Film and Video Preservation. But there is no comparable program in the field of television and video.<sup>235</sup>

Nearly a decade before the 1993 study, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that it was the “unresolved technical questions and the urgent demands of nitrate and color film preservation” which lead to the channeling of funds for the preservation of these materials. However, the Endowment argued that, “this [prioritization] should not be construed as an attempt to minimize the need for video preservation,” rather video preservation is recognized as a “problem of national significance.”<sup>236</sup>

While national funding and research within the archival field was directed towards solving the preservation challenges of film archives, preservation research was equally as active in the independent sector who focused on areas under-represented by the mainstream reports. One of the largest players in this preservation research was the Media Alliance, a media arts advocacy organization in New York City. Graham Leggat, director of Media Alliance testified before Congress as part of the hearings leading up to *Television and Video Preservation 1997*,

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<sup>235</sup> Robert Rosen, “Collection: Position Paper,” *Media Arts* 1, no. 11 (Winter 1985/1986): 8.

<sup>236</sup> Frank Hodsoll, “A Large Piece of America if Fading Away,” *Media Arts* 1, no.1 (June/July 1983): 14.

identifying two concerns of the organization, “video art works produced by national, regional and New York artists, and community television, produced by community-based organizations and video collectives.” Acknowledging the public funding provided by the National Endowment for the Arts for media arts centers, Leggat continued, “[this body of work] represents a major investment of both public and private funds into an historical and cultural legacy that unfortunately remains largely out of reach of both scholars and the public.” He suggests that this work remains inaccessible because the organizations who create these collections are “unfamiliar with moving image preservation, conservation and collection management,” and lack the resources in staff, funding, and technology necessary to archive these materials.<sup>237</sup>

Media Alliance began advocating for preservation of independent media much earlier. In 1991 the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council for the Arts provided funding for a survey of the video preservation practices of 111 individuals and institutions (predominately in the New York and the north-eastern United States), including libraries, archives, distributors, museums, and media arts centers, followed by a symposium hosted at the Museum of Modern Art. The resulting publication *Video Preservation: Securing the Future of the Past* summarizes the major findings from these efforts related to collection building, collections management, preservation, funding, and other “critical issues.”<sup>238</sup>

The findings of the Media Alliance report mirror the conclusions of the 1993 and 1997 studies that followed, but are specific to the issues raised by independent and non-commercial media makers and organizations. Cataloging and preservation funding are reoccurring themes. While distributors and exhibitors publish catalogs of circulating materials, few guides to the

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<sup>237</sup> National Film Preservation Board, “Television/Video Preservation Study: New York Public Hearing, March 1996,” <http://www.loc.gov/film/hrng96ny.html>.

<sup>238</sup> Deirdre Boyle, *Video Preservation: Securing the Future of the Past* (New York: Media Alliance, 1993).

archival holdings of institutions were available. Funding for preservation was limited within these organizations. Public funding from the New York State Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts was available, but limited, and private money was scarce. The report cited a single MacArthur foundation grant to the Carnegie Museums for the Andy Warhol Collection as the only example of private funding for a video preservation or cataloging effort.<sup>239</sup> One of the challenges to obtaining funding was defining what preservation entailed as Greg Lukow deputy direct of National Center for Film and Video Preservation explained:

A number of preservation projects were funded through *access* categories of various federal agencies, in part because they don't quite know yet what videotape preservation is. They're confident about extending public funds for film preservation, because it promises a long-term payoff of hundreds of years, but there's no such promise with video preservation.<sup>240</sup>

These are concerns that were raised throughout the media arts field – the need for technological solutions to preservation, as well as funding for preservation, cataloging, and access activities. But where this infrastructure existed, albeit in limited form, for independent filmmakers, video was new territory:

The preservation of film is a relatively recognized priority with known technical solutions and standardized cataloging procedures. Video (which includes broadcast television as well as independent video) is a field where there are as many technical questions as there are possible solutions, where there are no standard cataloging procedures, and where the very existence of independent video relative to broadcast television is an issue that requires much more education of funders and policy makers.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> The Media Alliance applied for a grant from the National Endowment from the Arts during this same time period for a cataloging project that was denied. Boyle, *Video Preservation*, 13.

<sup>240</sup> Boyle, *Video Preservation*, 28.

<sup>241</sup> Stephen Gong, "Collection: Working Session Paper," *Media Arts* 1, no. 11 (Winter 1985/1986): 8.

*Television and Video Preservation 1997* laid some of the groundwork for preservation activity in this area, but media arts centers continued to advocate for preservation and contribute to preservation research as well.

This contribution was also about self-education. There was an understanding that while the preservation fields could provide some insight and guidance, that the media arts field could contribute to this conversation as well. Media arts centers like San Francisco's Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) were active participants in the development of preservation interventions for independent media. In their 1993 report, Media Alliance described BAVC as "the only remaining media art center with state-of-the-art video equipment and professional engineering support" and "a likely center for a national technical preservation service."<sup>242</sup> BAVC officially began its preservation program in 1994 supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, entering the preservation field at a moment when audiovisual preservation efforts were focused on film and not video preservation.

In its efforts to support video preservation research, BAVC published *Playback: A Preservation Primer for Video* funded by the Getty Grant Program, in 1998. *Playback* brought together experts from the video and arts conservation aimed at "develop[ing] and implement[ing] a realistic strategy to ensure that these valuable materials [video artworks] are safeguarded for the future."<sup>243</sup> The publication begins by recognizing that a sustainable preservation strategy for video did not exist, and further that specialized "video conservation" training had yet to be developed. Because preservation strategies for audiovisual materials were based on the practices developed for film preservation (cool and dry passive storage and copying of materials on to new

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<sup>242</sup> Boyle, *Video Preservation*, 34.

<sup>243</sup> Debbie Hess Norris, forward to *Playback: A Preservation Primer for Video*, Sally Jo Fifer, et. al., eds. (San Francisco: Bay Area Video Coalition, 1998).



film-stock), at this time there was no recognized preservation strategy for videotape materials, which must be migrated to new formats to preserve the informational and aesthetic content.<sup>244</sup> Whereas film has an artifactual value, videotape does not. BAVC's guide however, attempts to describe a method of conservation for videotape materials that mirrors the active conservation procedures practiced as part of film preservation.

*Playback* calls for the creation of a "new discipline within the field of conservation," suggesting that conservators must partner with the engineers of video technology to begin to develop preservation models for videotape.<sup>245</sup> More significantly, this publication argues to legitimize video as art suggesting that museums and other cultural institutions must also become part of a larger infrastructure for the preservation of these art works.<sup>246</sup> This was the same move made by film archivists and film enthusiasts in the 1930s as film archiving and film studies came of age.<sup>247</sup> The study collection at the Museum of Modern Art is an example of these early efforts – film was collected in order to be studied, its institutionalization in the museum context helped to legitimize film as an object of study and as a work of art.<sup>248</sup> As such, film preservation, and now video preservation, should follow the practices of conservation, that is, preservation of the informational as well as artifactual values of the material.

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<sup>244</sup> The authors of the manual argue that "there is no strategy for working with videotape, and there is no planned, comprehensive effort to develop specialists in video conservation." Sally Jo Fifer, et.al, eds., *Playback: A Preservation Primer for Video* (San Francisco: Bay Area Video Coalition, 1998), 2.

<sup>245</sup> Fifer, *Playback*, 3.

<sup>246</sup> Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, eds., *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture, 2000). BAVC's Moriah Unilukas suggested that this text was an attempt by the editors to support the legitimization of video as art. Interview with the author, November 11, 2013.

<sup>247</sup> See Dana Polan, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007); Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, eds., *Inventing Film Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008)

<sup>248</sup> See Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

*Playback* emphasizes this mode of preservation for videotape particularly in the art museum context, suggesting that the technology, also carries an artifactual value:

The availability of videotape players, like videotape itself, is rarely considered; the playing of videotape is thought of primarily in terms of image and sound. It is necessary to consider both the playback equipment and the videotape when addressing the preservation of original materials, especially installation art.<sup>249</sup>

Here video preservation is described in relation to this original technology, preserving not only the image and sound, but the technological context of playback as well.

But this guide is also a call for developing “realistic strategies” for the preservation of video works, particular as technology changes at a relatively rapid pace:

While we are belatedly concerned about the fate of the works that have gone before us, we must develop methodologies for future challenges. Unless practice for videotape preservation begins to be articulated with a realistic look at scale and resources, we know that tapes produced only fifteen years ago will soon be lost forever. The institutions and individuals who oversee these tapes agree that the need for preservation is immediate, not just for art on video, but future art using all new technologies.<sup>250</sup>

Here the guide recognizes this preservation challenge in technological terms, not limited to analog carriers but acknowledging that this work will shape endeavors to preserve digital media as well. It is the question of “realistic” and sustainable strategies that becomes a concern for independent media. In the context of archives and museums, a conservators point of view may be appropriate, but these are standards that cannot be met by small archives and non-archives like media arts centers. As a media arts center, BAVC has developed tools such as the Audio/Visual Artifact Atlas (AVAA) for the identification of playback errors as well as the Secure Media Network (SMN), a digital archive for the Dance Heritage Coalition, and continues to offer “boutique” preservation strategies for independent media artists and archives. BAVC’s

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<sup>249</sup> Fifer, *Playback*, 65.

<sup>250</sup> Fifer, *Playback*, 4.

practices have been informed by their constituency, but remain dedicated to a concept of preservation suggested by the archival field.<sup>251</sup>

Whether defined by archival practice or by media arts centers, the practice of audiovisual media preservation is similar. In terms of storage, artifacts must be stored in stable cold and dry environments in inert archival containers. Preservation drives access; if stabilized in cold storage, the materials are inaccessible, so media must be migrated to new formats, whether film or video, in order to be used. Further, the materials must be cataloged so they are discoverable. As these publications from BAVC and Media Alliance demonstrate, media arts centers advocated for preservation and access of these materials alongside their archival counterparts. The conclusions from these publications reflect the conclusions from the National Film Preservation Board's reports published in the same decade. These efforts emerging from the media arts community articulate the need for preservation measures, but the guidelines align closely with the definitions of preservation emerging from the preservation field – no localized solutions are suggested. While being overlooked by the preservation fields, they strive to meet their standards.

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<sup>251</sup> "Quality Control Tools for Video Preservation," accessed April 9, 2014, <http://bavc.org/qctools>.

## 5.2 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AS ‘IMPERFECT ARCHIVES’

*When preservation is viewed within this broader cultural context – the familiar conditions prevalent in other issues shared by the independent media arts field come to the surface – access to technology, access to funding, access to information, access to venues which enable the expression of disparate ideas.*<sup>252</sup>

Preservation from the point of view of media arts centers is a simple concept, “ensuring that works are not lost and are accessible for the future.”<sup>253</sup> However, audiovisual preservation is a resource-heavy activity, one which has been understood as the work of other professionals such as archivists and conservators. In *Video Preservation: Securing the Future of the Past* the Media Alliance reflected “video collectors know environmental factors impact the life of tape, yet many are uncertain what the parameters of good archival practice are,” this is the work of archivists and conservators, trained to interact with this technology.<sup>254</sup> In addition, institutionalization of independent media brings about additional political tensions, as Deirdre Boyle observed, “given video’s roots in anti-establishment Sixties, there is an inevitable tension between those who favor standardized, centralized, nationalized methods and those who believe in decentralized, low-cost, low-tech, how-to alternatives.”<sup>255</sup> The 1997 report from the National Film Preservation Board and more recently, the *Digital Dilemma 2* from the Academy of Motion

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<sup>252</sup> Mary Esbjornson, “Preservation for the Record,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (July/August 1993): 10-11.

<sup>253</sup> J. Ronald Green, “Film and Not-for-Profit Media Institutions,” in *Film/Culture Explorations of Cinema in its Social Context*, ed. Sari Thomas (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 39.

<sup>254</sup> Boyle, *Video Preservation*, 10.

<sup>255</sup> Boyle, *Video Preservation*, 13.

Picture Arts and Sciences emphasize a need for similar solutions for independent and non-commercial media, but such low-cost, low-tech, how-to, do-it-yourself solutions are not explored.

It is not that these methods do not exist, rather they remain unrecognized as preservation methods as they do not meet the definition of preservation as outlined by preservation professionals. In an effort to acknowledge the preservation practices of resource-limited Latin American film archives, Janet Ceja Alcalá introduces the concept of the “imperfect archives.” The term is derived from filmmaker García Espinosa’s idea of the “imperfect cinema,” described as such because the “approach to preserving cinema was not bound by the standards of the professionally polished movie; [the imperfect cinema] was a cinema of hunger,” and, as such, “[the archivists] archival codes and standards were outside of the established norm.”<sup>256</sup> Ceja Alcalá defines the practice of preservation within the wider cultural context of Latin America in archives that cannot support the standards of preservation as defined by European and North American archival professionals.

Ceja Alcalá discusses the formation of UCAL (Unión de Cinematecas de América Latina), a regional network of film archivists formed in Latin America in the 1960s. These archivists are described as “amateurs,” who like those that drove the media arts centers movement aimed to “circulate, exhibit, and care” for the films being created in their respective institutions. This was a “filmmakers movement” regionally focused on building a national cinema and a radical political move from the cinemateques who preserved and provided access to this revolutionary cinema.

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<sup>256</sup> Janet Ceja Alcalá, “Imperfect Archives and the Principle of Social Praxis in the History of Film Preservation in Latin America,” *Moving Image* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 81.

Emerging out of the radical politics of the 1960s and 70s the media arts center movement supported an independent cinema, which like the imperfect cinema stood in opposition to mainstream and commercial cinema. Along with the “pragmatic concerns for how to preserve these materials,” media arts centers also began to “see preservation as politicized,”<sup>257</sup> demonstrated by a question posed by video preservation advocate Deirdre Boyle:

what role does content play in decisions to preserve video... what role does the Nineties’ political conservatism play in decisions about preserving early video work, which often documented radical political activism, social change and unlicensed creative expression during the Sixties and Seventies?<sup>258</sup>

Much like their Latin American counterparts, each of these organizations in this study demonstrate an understanding of the professional standards of preservation, but have developed preservation methods and standards according to the local expertise and resources, and philosophy of media production.

Operating as a traditional media arts center, Pittsburgh Filmmakers supports the production regional media, offering educational opportunities, supporting local exhibition of media, as well as providing technological and financial support for artists. While preservation is not the focus of the organization, they have become an archives of last resort for several collections of archival media including the film *Pittsburgh* produced for the city’s 1958 Bicentennial celebration. Pittsburgh Filmmakers took custody of the film over two decades after its production, in 1979. At that time, two new 16mm prints were created from the original 35mm negative. One of these 16mm prints was sent to Anthology Archives for preservation, but the thirty-thousand feet of original negatives, workprints, and outtakes remained untouched. At

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<sup>257</sup> “Conference 1991 Wrap-Up,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (September 1991): 8, 10-12.

<sup>258</sup> Esbjornson, “Preservation for the Record,” 10-11.

the time, representatives of Pittsburgh Filmmakers articulated a plan to index and catalog the footage, however this project would remain unrealized until 2008.<sup>259</sup>

Executive director Charlie Humphrey explained that he attempted to identify a funding source for the preservation of the film throughout his tenure with the organization.<sup>260</sup> But, it was not until the 250th anniversary of the city's founding in 2008 that Humphrey was able to successfully raise the necessary funds to inspect and digitize the film. During this 2008 project the original elements were cleaned and inspected and the original negatives were used to create a high definition digital video copy of the film.<sup>261</sup> It was during this inspection of the original elements that an alternate version of the film was uncovered.<sup>262</sup> These trims and outtakes were also digitized and utilized as part of the *Pittsburgh Reframed at 250* project in which local artists were asked to reuse aspects of the *Pittsburgh* footage to create new two minute and fifty second short films celebrating Pittsburgh. *Pittsburgh* and the *Pittsburgh Reframed* shorts were screened during the city-wide 250th celebration and released on DVD.

Aspects of this digitization project closely resemble film preservation as it is defined within the archival context. The original negatives, and not the 16mm reduction print from the 1970s, were inspected, cleaned, and digitized to create a new access copy of the film. During this process the original aesthetics of the film were also respected, including an attempt to correct the color of the film that had faded with time. However, this preservation project falls short of

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<sup>259</sup> Ed Blank, "Festival Screens \$150,000 Curiosity," *Pittsburgh Press* (June 10, 1979).

<sup>260</sup> Humphrey recalled applying to the National Endowment for the Arts for preservation support, but could not remember why the grant was rejected. He believes it was due to a failure of the granting agency to recognize the significance of the film. Interview with the author, July 11, 2013.

<sup>261</sup> "Pittsburgh Filmmakers and Pittsburgh Center for the Arts Announce *Pittsburgh Reframed (at 250)*, Short Films to Celebrate the City," press release, August, 26, 2008.

<sup>262</sup> For a history of the film see, Sean P. Kilcoyne, "*Pittsburgh* (1959): 'Equilibriums of Paradox' and the Bicentennial City of Tomorrow," *The Moving Image* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 70-94.

the archival definition as a new film copy was not created and the film has not been passively preserved in properly controlled archival storage.

The focus of the *Reframed* project was access and reuse of the material. The original medium was not important to Pittsburgh Filmmakers. For those creating the *Reframed* shorts, the film medium is meaningless as most contemporary artists are working with digital video. Digitized, the film became accessible to the wider Pittsburgh community and could be screened and distributed on DVD, and further the digitized scans of the negatives and outtakes allowed artists to reuse the material and create new works reframing this footage in a contemporary context.

Archivist Sean Kilcoyne acknowledges Pittsburgh Filmmaker's attempt to make the film widely accessible to general audiences, suggesting that as a media arts center without a mission or mandate for preservation the organization has done "remarkably well" as custodians of the film. However, Kilcoyne expresses a greater concern for the inaccessibility of the original elements that have not been digitized, cataloged, or stored in an "archival manner," and argues that while the digitization can be understood as the first steps towards preservation, that film remains "unpreserved." Writing from an archivists' perspective Kilcoyne further advocates for the film, and its "specific archival needs," arguing:

at a minimum, film elements should be inspected and cataloged; new elements should be created photochemically and stored in secure, climate-controlled facilities; and issues of access should be creatively resolved so that in addition to a digital version of the film being made available, *Pittsburgh* can be seen on the screen, at last, in 35mm.<sup>263</sup>

While these recommendations are sound, they illustrate the tension between the practices at media arts centers and archival institutions. While the original elements of *Pittsburgh* have not

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<sup>263</sup> Kilcoyne, "*Pittsburgh* (1959)," 87.



been fully cataloged or digitized, the film is now accessible in digital form. The film has also been listed in Rick Prelinger's 2006 *Field Guide to Sponsored Films*, a catalog of industrial and institutional films, underwritten by the National Film Preservation Foundation.<sup>264</sup> Charlie Humphrey also suggested that the film is open to anyone who is interested in conducting further research. In this sense, *Pittsburgh* is open and accessible, at least more accessible than it would be in cold storage in an archival facility. It is this continued access to the informational content of *Pittsburgh* and the ability to reuse and transform this work that is significant in this example; as Humphrey explained, "I think we [Pittsburgh Filmmakers] do have a responsibility to continue to revisit that film and to find way to reflect Pittsburgh back to itself."<sup>265</sup>

Preservation at Termite Television closely resembles the practices at Pittsburgh Filmmakers – the original media does not dictate the preservation method for the material. In fact, all documentation deemed to be archival by the collective (moving image or otherwise) is digitized and linked to the collective's website [termite.org](http://termite.org). Over the past two decades the collective has been more conscious of their efforts to preserve the history of the organization, making appraisal decisions about the documentation that is digitized and displayed on the website. Artifacts that cannot be digitized are displayed in a museum-of-sorts on designated shelving at the entrance to Termite TV's office.

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<sup>264</sup> Rick Prelinger, *The Field Guide to Sponsored Films* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2006).

<sup>265</sup> Charlie Humphrey, interview with the author, July 11, 2013.



**Figure 4.** Termite TV's *Living Documentary* Exhibit<sup>266</sup>

The Termite Television Collective philosophy is influenced by film critic Manny Farber's idea of "termite art" which "moves always forward, eating its own boundaries, and likely as not, leaves nothing in its path but evidence of eager, industrious, unkempt activities."<sup>267</sup> As a small group of media artists, Termite TV breaks from the traditional media arts center model, operating as "laboratory," as described by founder Michael Kuetemeyer. At Termite TV media production is less about the end result and more about the process of production and continual experimentation with new models for media. In this way, the collective is always learning, changing and adapting, and looking forward to the next project, as such experimentation and immediacy are part of the aesthetic of Termite TV productions. These are not polished media products, nor are they intended to be.

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<sup>266</sup> Photograph by the author, August 2013.

<sup>267</sup> As quoted on "About Termite," accessed April 9, 2014, <http://www.termite.org/about.html>.

The five-minute Life Story model illustrates this point. Originally this template for production was utilized as part the collective's Living Documentary Tour.<sup>268</sup> Modeled on a circus or traveling performance, the collective traveled the United States in 1999 gathering five-minute stories, documenting the thoughts and histories of willing participants as the millennium approached. This Life Story model grew from the need to make an immediate connection with the communities the collective was visiting as they toured the country. The format is simple, each interviewee is placed in front of a camera (wherever they may be, whether it is playground, or a jail cell, or in their own home) and is asked to tell their story in five minutes. The success of this model for the Living Documentaries Tour has inspired the collective to continue gathering Life Stories. The videos are now available through a web portal that allows users to sort the stories by name or location, creating new meaning as they navigate the ever-growing collection of interviews.<sup>269</sup> The simplicity and intimacy of this model has allowed Termites to adapt this model for use in media literacy workshops as well, inspiring new projects like Messages in Motion. Messages in Motion further experiments with the Living Documentaries model at a local level; the blue Messages in Motion Van, outfitted for video production, travels throughout Philadelphia bringing the tools of production to community groups that create video postcards to tell their stories.<sup>270</sup>

It is this continual experimentation and growth that inspires the collective, thus the idea of preservation is antithetical to the Termite TV philosophy. However, in 2003 "something

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<sup>268</sup> Termite Dorothea Braemer is the originator of the 5-Minute Life Stories project. For a history of the project see, Dorothea Braemer, "The Living Documentary Journey Across the US," *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (Summer 2000): 10-11. Documentation and videos from the The Living Documentary project may be accessed at <http://termitetv.org/livingdoc/livingdoc.html>.

<sup>269</sup> Available at <http://termite.org/lifestories/>.

<sup>270</sup> Termite Laura Deutch is the originator and director of the Messages in Motion project. Messages in Motion may be accessed at <http://messagesinmotion.com>.

interesting happened,” as Termite Anula Shetty explained; during this time the collective was developing programming related to the current Gulf War and began looking back at the programming that the collective had produced during the Desert Storm Conflict in the 1990s.<sup>271</sup> Shetty explained that this was the first time the collective considered the preservation of their work, “before we weren’t thinking about archiving, but seeing those two shows juxtaposed – the new work and the old work – that’s when we realized this is really valuable.”<sup>272</sup> It was at this point that the collective began a more conscious effort to collect and preserve the work that they create.

The Termite aesthetic carries though to the preservation of this work; the glitches, fall-out, and degradation on the videotapes are transferred to the digital copy and become part of the record. There is no attempt to restore and correct the damage that has occurred as the physical videotapes are digitized with the tools that the collective has available. While the physical tapes are stored at the Termite TV office, the digitized works are made available through [termite.org](http://termite.org) using a variety of web-based freeware such as Blip, You Tube, iTunes, Vimeo, Wordpress, and Dupal. Much like the development of other Termite TV projects, the archive is approached with the same experimentation and immediacy. The focus here is on providing continued access to the works, rather than preserving a pristine copy of an idealized original.

The collective does have an understanding of the steps that ‘should’ be taken to preserve their works, but does not have the resources to preserve the original materials in cold storage or create high-resolution preservation copies that meet the archival standards. Collective members discussed the preservation programs offered by the BAVC, but the preservation options offered

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<sup>271</sup> “The War Show” (2003) and “Desert Storm” (1992) are available at <http://www.termite.org/video.html>.

<sup>272</sup> Anula Shetty and Michael Kuetemeyer, interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

by the media arts center remain unattainable with Termite's limited resources. Instead, the collective preserves their work according to their own standards and capabilities. When discussing the other options explored by the collective Shetty and Kuetemeyer explained, "it would be nice to have someone fixing the dropouts and things like that, but on the other hand all the digital artifacts that are there are part of the Termite way of looking at it."<sup>273</sup> These 'imperfections' become part of the history of the archive, evidence of the preservation process, and of the resourcefulness of the collective to work with the tools they have available to provide continued access to their work.

While Paper Tiger Television shares this same do-it-yourself ethos of media production, the collective has attempted to formalize the preservation process meeting the standards set by the preservation field. Since the mid-1990s the collective has worked from a common space on Lafayette Street in New York City. Like Termite TV, this space serves as a meeting site for collective members, a workspace for editing, and as the administrative office for the collective. The space also houses over three-hundred videotapes representing thirty years of Paper Tiger Television productions along with external hard-drives and computers storing recent productions. Founding Tiger, DeeDee Halleck expressed concerns for the physical preservation of the materials in this space. She explained that with the limited resources of the collective, maintaining a stable environment for the tapes has been impossible. Recently, she used her personal funds to purchase a new window air conditioning unit, to keep the space comfortable for the collective members. The windows in the space are an additional concern for Halleck as they introduce heat and sunlight which also pose a risk for the videotape collection.

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<sup>273</sup> Anula Shetty and Michael Kuetemeyer, interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

This inability of the collective to maintain a preservation environment for the collection was one of the reasons cited for the recent donation of the master videotapes to the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University in 2010. This was not the first time that the collective explored the option of donating materials to an archival repository to ensure the continued preservation of these works. In a 1998 letter discussing the preservation the *Communications Update* master tapes produced in the early 1980s, the collective suggested it was “ill-equipped to archive [the tapes] and make them publically accessible.”<sup>274</sup> During this time, the collective was working to raise funds to conduct an internal preservation assessment of the materials and to catalog their growing videotape collection according to MARC cataloging standards, however the physical preservation and transfer of the materials to sustainable formats was still beyond the capabilities of the collective.

In order to achieve these goals, the collective recognized that they would require the assistance of an archival institution. Paper Tiger representatives began negotiations with New York University’s Tamiment Institute Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives seeking an arrangement that would provide secure and climate-controlled facilities for the master videotapes as well as a means for providing access to these works through the creation of new transfers. While the Tamiment Library expressed an interest in the collectives’ paper records, the videotapes were a subject for concern:

[The archivist] told you that he was definitely interested in the program documentation files and that there was no reason that these materials, which have none of the preservation and funding issues associated with the programs themselves (described below), could be donated to Tamiment immediately, if Paper Tiger desires.

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<sup>274</sup> Letter to Liza Bear, September 1, 1998; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 1; folder 56; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

That said, there are some major issues that would need to be addressed and resolved, by both parties, before the major part of the donation (the programs) could be considered. They revolve around the costs (in terms of both time and money) of such a project and copyright considerations.<sup>275</sup>

The curator for nonprint collections, suggested that the library and archives were no better equipped to preserve and archive the videotape materials from Paper Tiger's collections, citing the lack of properly controlled environmental storage and technology required to migrate and clean the videotape materials.<sup>276</sup> The cost of preservation in this case, outweighed the benefits of accessioning the collection.

Until Paper Tiger found a home for its collection in 2010 with the Fales Library and Special Collections, the collective worked to preserve and catalog their videotape collection to the best of their ability with the assistance of the Media Alliance. This began with a fundraising effort dubbed "The Year of the Tiger," which solicited funding to support the assessment of materials by collective members and interns, the creation of a MARC compatible catalog using a FileMaker Pro Database template developed for media arts centers by the Media Alliance and

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<sup>275</sup> Letter from Tamiment Institute Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives NYU, November 9, 1998; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 4; folder 52; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

<sup>276</sup> The curator suggests that at present a preservation strategy does not exist for video: "I remind you that although I use the term 'preservation' in connection with video, this is only a kind of shorthand. At present there is no definitive way to preserve video archivally, other than transfer it to film, which is prohibitively expensive; the best one can do is to clean and maintain original tapes and remaster them onto the best media then available (both in terms of physical durability and the amount of hardware available in the world to play it back), and store them in climate-controlled facilities." Letter from Tamiment Institute Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives NYU, November 9, 1998; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 4; folder 52; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

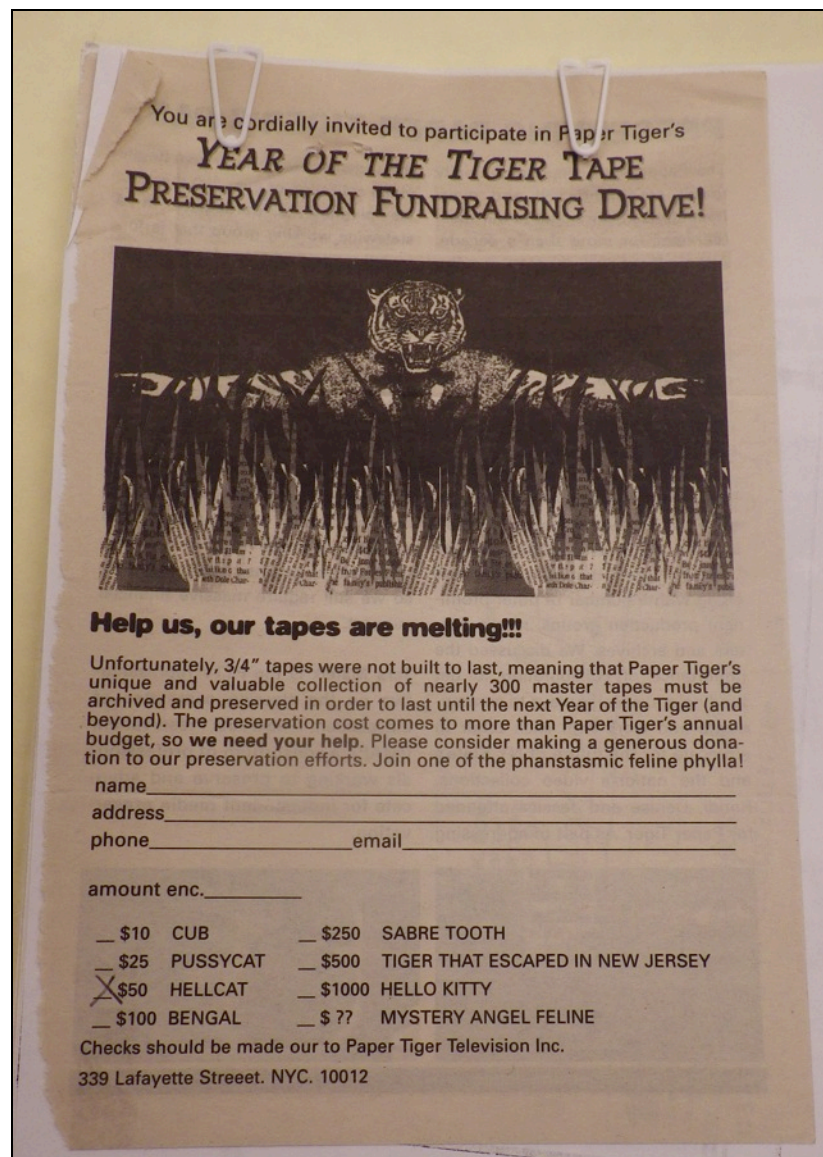


Figure 5. Year of the Tiger Flyer<sup>277</sup>

<sup>277</sup> Photographed at the Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.



IMAP (Independent Media Arts Preservation), and the transfer of the videos onto digital formats.<sup>278</sup> As a means for guiding this preservation workflow, the collective printed extensive instructions, similar to the archival workflow outlined in the National Film Preservation's *Film Preservation Guide*.<sup>279</sup> Interns were first instructed to watch each video and record information about the condition of the tape using the "Tape Documentation Form" and the "Video Glitch Glossary" (see Appendix D). This information was then used to catalog the materials and prioritize digitization. Using the resources and technology available within the collective, the tapes were then migrated to digital formats.<sup>280</sup>

DeeDee Halleck explained that Mona Jimenez (former director of Media Alliance and IMAP) assisted Paper Tiger in developing their in-house preservation program and has helped many groups like Paper Tiger to get the "right sort of preservation" for their materials.<sup>281</sup> Yet, another Paper Tiger affiliate working for the Metropolitan Museum of Art expressed some concern over the digitization of the materials, which was not completed to archival standards, suggesting that the collective should have consulted a professional who could have better assisted in the design of a preservation workflow that would meet archival standards.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> A history of the IMAP Cataloging Project can be found at "Cataloging Project," [http://www.imappreserve.org/cat\\_proj/index.html](http://www.imappreserve.org/cat_proj/index.html). The organization continues to distribute the cataloging template and provide support for the preservation of independent media through publications and workshops. The Year of the Tiger Flyer, n.d., Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 4; folder 53; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

<sup>279</sup> National Film Preservation Foundation, *The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004), 94. The "Print Condition Report" may also be accessed at [http://www.filmpreservation.org/userfiles/image/PDFs/pcr\\_blank.pdf](http://www.filmpreservation.org/userfiles/image/PDFs/pcr_blank.pdf).

<sup>280</sup> The collective made attempts to correct damage where possible before migrating the materials.

<sup>281</sup> DeeDee Halleck, interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

<sup>282</sup> As the digitization was limited by technology and disk-space available to the collective, the videotapes were digitized using compressed video codex, which reduce the quality of the video in order to reduce the size of the video file. Archival standards suggest the use of uncompressed codex which preserves the integrity of the original.

The restoration of *Pittsburgh* revealed similar tensions between the professional archival standards and the standards that are attainable within media arts centers. Paper Tiger's records demonstrate that the collective had a sophisticated knowledge of preservation and understood the archival standards.<sup>283</sup> The collective sought the advice of professional archivists and conservators, who could not suggest feasible solutions for preservation within their means. Like Termite, services such as those provided by BAVC were too expensive for the collective. Chicago's Video Databank has preserved a handful of Paper Tiger's videotapes, but the collective devised its own means of preservation through in-house digitization for the remainder of the collection.

### 5.3 THE MEDIUM IS NOT THE MESSAGE

*[Preservation] might at first glance seem an odd concern for groups which have only been around for ten or fifteen years, but a harder look tells a different story. ...[These] groups face a different kind of preservation problem: their archives contain materials documenting the development of their regional or ethnic communities – film footage and videotape not more than twenty years old, and so not threatened with imminent chemical disintegration, but in jeopardy nonetheless, as underfunded groups struggle to properly store, catalog and make accessible material that should be in active use by scholars, researchers, and media artists.*<sup>284</sup>

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan argued that “the medium is the message;” audiovisual archivists have embraced his philosophy which suggests that the informational content of a record is bound to the medium on which it is imprinted. However, the preservation efforts within the cases here demonstrate that in some instances, it is the informational content and not

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<sup>283</sup> Series I and IV of the Paper Tiger Television Archive contain a number of folders containing documentation related to the preservation.

<sup>284</sup> Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *The Bottom Line: Funding For Media Arts Organizations* (San Francisco: National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, 1991), 12.

the preservation of the media artifact that should take precedence. While it is certainly true that some films may require preservation as works of art and thus be preserved on the original medium, audiovisual preservation need not be defined by the medium in all cases.

Through their efforts to meet the preservation standards as defined by archival professionals, media arts centers have developed localized practices which adhering to their individual philosophies and standards. These are deliberate efforts to extend the life of the media in their collections, and more importantly, to make these collections accessible to others. It is the continued access and re-use of the informational content of the media collections which is most significant here.

Yet, these collections are vulnerable. These media arts centers have actively engaged in the development of local solutions that are working for the short term, but as Kate Horsfield of the Video Data Bank argues, “without access to low-cost technologies and services we will be buffeted by the gatekeepers who decide which programs are important,” and which survive.<sup>285</sup> The ephemerality of audiovisual media inherently puts these collections at risk, though in some cases, like Termite TV, this decay and eventual loss may be understood as part of the process. For cases like Paper Tiger Television who understand their archive to contain not only the history of the collective but also the histories of the communities they have documented, this fear of loss outweighs any desire to maintain local control of the collection. In this case, the collective chose to transfer custody of their collection to an organization that could provide proper environmental storage, but with the loss of control and access.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Esbjornson, “Preservation for the Record,” 10-11.

<sup>286</sup> These tensions are further explored in the final chapter.

In her discussion of the imperfect archive Ceja Alcalá concludes, “the history of the archival experience of Latin American countries and institutions ...is a call for archivists, educators, and scholars to take into account the nuances of preservation practice in different settings in relation to the cultures of cinematic practice that created them.”<sup>287</sup> Media arts centers exemplify this need to pluralize preservation practices and to recognize the context and practices of creation as significant to the preservation of these materials.

From the archival perspective, the practice of preservation is a constant give and take between preservation and access. Archival materials must be carefully preserved to ensure their longevity, yet the use of the materials introduces contaminants and dangers that may destroy the records. Further, archival preservation is predicated on the continued preservation of the original, but in the case of audiovisual materials, there is no single original. The practice of audiovisual archiving has been further defined by the preservation of the filmic object. To preserve an audiovisual record is to preserve a fictionalized original, an ideal copy of a record that will always exist in multiples. During preservation, both the aesthetic and informational values of this original must be retained. As publications from the media arts field have demonstrated, in theory media arts centers adhere to this archival ideal (exemplified by BAVC’s *Playback*), but as this chapter has demonstrated, in practice a different set of values emerges. Preservation is instead defined entirely by the informational content of the audiovisual record. While the aesthetic values are preserved when financially and technically possible, it is the transfer of the information contained on the tapes, reels, and filmstrips that is privileged here. Counter to the accepted philosophy of audiovisual archives, the original medium does not dictate

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<sup>287</sup> Ceja Alcalá, “Imperfect Archives,” 92.

the preservation medium.<sup>288</sup> The medium that will provide immediate accessibility to the informational content is preferred over the medium that will ensure that all of the original aesthetic and artifactual values have been retained.

This suggests for audiovisual archives (at least those desiring to function as archives and not as museums) that in many cases, the original medium does not dictate the mode of preservation, opening the possibility for archives to look to more affordable and accessible methods of migration and digital preservation, rather than relying on costly transfers to obsolete media (i.e. film to film transfers) to preserve the artifactual values of the original.

While media arts centers attempt to meet the standards established by the preservation community because they understand the fragility of the medium, these standards are too resource dependent to be attainable and limit access to collections. While cold storage may prolong the life of the materials, such passive preservation efforts make the materials inaccessible for use. The active preservation models that insist upon the migration of audiovisual materials to contemporary materials with respect to the original media are equally unsuited here. In the case of media arts centers, it is not necessary to expend these resources to ensure that the work is experienced in the same material context in which it was created, rather it is more important that these collections continue to be accessible in order to uphold the missions of these organizations – to establish an alternative to the mainstream.

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<sup>288</sup> See Ray Edmondson, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles* (Paris: UNESCO, 2004).

## 6.0 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AND MEDIA LITERACY

*Changes in technology seem to hit like hurricanes... Like a hurricane, technology isn't going anywhere, it's going everywhere. Unlike a hurricane, it will never stop. How do nonprofit media arts organizations cope with this mischievous force? By accepting the fact that change is a constant in media arts. We must acclimate ourselves and our organizations to changes in technology. If the hurricane is expected, and accepted, its still a big blow, but risks can be minimized.*<sup>289</sup>

Technology plays a powerful role in the preservation of audiovisual media. Leo Enticknap observed, “cinema is virtually unique among art forms and recording media in the complexity of and extent to which it depends on the combination of technologies used in the creation, distribution, and exhibition of its core product.”<sup>290</sup> As the last chapter illustrated, the preservation of audiovisual media is closely tied to these technologies. Manuals developed for film archivists address not only the chemical and material makeup of the media, but also the various technologies necessary to inspect and access archival audiovisual materials. The National Film Preservation Foundation’s *Film Preservation Guide* introduces archivists to the technology necessary for a minimal film inspection (rewinds, projection reels, cores, split reels, splicers, sound readers, and footage counters), as well as more advanced processes offered by labs (wet-gate and optical printing, redimensioning, and digital restoration techniques). *The*

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<sup>289</sup> Luke Hones, “Seven Generations From Now, or Barefoot on the Information Superhighway,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (July/August 1993): 3.

<sup>290</sup> Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

*Guide* also addresses the visual identification of various formats and technologies, such as magnetic and optical soundtracks, negative and reversal film stock, as well as methods for dating film from date codes imprinted by the manufacturer.<sup>291</sup> More advanced manuals, such as *Restoration of Motion Picture Film*, describe the chemical composition of the film base (including diagrams of the molecular structure of the plastics), as well as the mechanics of cameras, projectors, and sound equipment.<sup>292</sup> And, projection manuals, such as Torkell Sætervadt's publications from the International Federation of Film Archivists (FIAP), assume that film archivists and curators must have intimate knowledge of the design and operation of projection systems as well.<sup>293</sup>

These manuals emphasize the technical proficiency archival professionals must have to complete even a simple inspection of audiovisual materials. This specialized knowledge of cameras, projectors, playback equipment, and recording media is one shared by the creators of media as well. As access points for media technology and its products, media arts centers have developed methods for teaching audiences to watch and critique media, alongside methods for instructing novice users to create and produce media. This chapter will explore these training opportunities developed at each of the media arts centers through their approaches to creating and exhibiting media.

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<sup>291</sup> National Film Preservation Foundation, *The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums* (San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004). For a similar guide addressing videotape preservation, see Steven Davidson and Gregory Lukow, eds., *The Administration of Television Newfilm and Videotape Collections: A Curatorial Manual* (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1997).

<sup>292</sup> Paul Read and Mar-Paul Meyer eds., *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 2000).

<sup>293</sup> Torkell Sætervadt, *The Advanced Projection Manual* (Brussels: FIAP, 2006); and Torkell Sætervadt, *FIAP Digital Projection Guide* (Brussels: FIAP, 2012).

## 6.1 HOW TO MAKE INDEPENDENT MEDIA

*The artistic future of the motion picture in America rests in the hands of the amateur.*

*-C. Adolph Glassgold, 1929<sup>294</sup>*

*The difference between regular broadcast-TV, educational-TV, and Guerrilla Television, is this: The networks are run by people who operate the cameras in their own interest. Educational-TV is where Liberals demand the cameras to operate in the people's interest. And Guerrilla Television gets cameras to the people to let them do it themselves.*

*-Michael Shamberg, Guerrilla Television, 1971<sup>295</sup>*

The first small-gauge film stocks were produced in 1909 and were quickly followed by the production of consumer grade recording and playback technology. Film historian Jan-Christopher Horak credits Eastman Kodak's introduction of 16mm film and the Cine-Kodak camera in 1924 with popularizing early amateur and avant-garde production in the United States.<sup>296</sup> Guides and manuals, such as James Cameron's 1928 *Amateur Movie Craft*, also date to this decade. Cameron's guide introduces "take-your-own-movie-fans" to basic film technology, including cameras, film stocks, projectors, lenses, and lights. The guide also discusses the use of this technology, from how to use the camera, how to compose and light shots, and how to project the finished product. Similar guides, such as Kodak's *How to Make Good Home Movies*, provided a technical introduction for the average home movie maker including an introduction to the camera, lenses, lighting and framing techniques, as well as

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<sup>294</sup> As quoted in Jan-Christopher Horak, "The First American Avant-Garde, 1919-1945," in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Avant-Garde 1919-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>295</sup> Michael Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 37.

<sup>296</sup> As quoted in Jan-Christopher Horak, "The First American Avant-Garde, 1919-1945," in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Avant-Garde 1919-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 18.



projection and maintenance, helping to popularize the practice of creating home movies, while advertising Kodak's products.<sup>297</sup>

Guides such as Raymond Spottiswoode's *Film and Its Techniques* and Lenny Lipton's 1972 *Independent Film Making* are intended for avant-garde filmmakers, documentarians, and university film students, addressing "practical problems likely to be encountered by the smaller production unit."<sup>298</sup> Spottiswoode's text begins by reminding the reader of the highly specialized knowledge required to produce a film: "technically, film making is immensely complicated, by far exceeding any of the other arts in range of scientific processes and manipulation of mechanical skills."<sup>299</sup> These texts cover the mechanics of filmmaking from the hardware (cameras, lab processing, editing equipment, and projectors), to the software (film stocks, recorded sound media, and the material makeup of the media), as well as the production process (storyboarding, scriptwriting, distribution, exhibition).

Media arts centers prevailed at this technologically dependent art, deferring the cost of media production by providing equipment rentals and funding for artists, technology instruction, and mechanisms for distribution and exhibition. Media arts centers and media arts collectives also published their own guides to media production, addressing to an audience seeking outlets for media creation that did not conform to the commercial norms – repurposing the technology of media production for larger aims.

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<sup>297</sup> *How to Make Good Movies* (New York: Eastman Kodak, 1963). For a detailed discussion of these publications see "The Literature of Amateur Motion Pictures," in Alan Kattelle, *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897-1979* (Nashua, NH: Transition Publishing, 2000).

<sup>298</sup> Raymond Spottiswoode, *Film and Its Techniques* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970); and Lenny Lipton, *Independent Film Making* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972). *Film and Its Techniques* was originally published in 1951, and by 1970 the manual was in its thirteenth printing. Contemporary guides adhere to this same format, See Steven Ascher & Edward Pincus, *The Filmmaker's Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for the Digital Age* (New York: Plume, 2007).

<sup>299</sup> Spottiswoode, *Film and Its Techniques*, 389.

Artist Michael Shamberg and the Raindance Corporation published *Guerrilla Television*, a manual/manifesto illustrating the use of television as an “information tool,” in 1971. The publication begins with a “meta-manual” outlining the philosophy of Guerrilla Media. *Guerrilla Television* is a guide to creating feedback loops in the commercially dominated media culture of “Media-America,” aiming to arm media producers with the tools that they need to take control of the country’s communication channels. This manual is not simply an instruction booklet for how to create home movies or amateur productions, nor is it simply an expression of the desires of a counter-culture. Instead, this guide advocates for democratic access and use of information channels:

No alternate cultural vision is going to succeed in Media-American unless it has its own alternate information structures, not just alternate content pumped across the existing ones. And that’s what videotape, with Cable-TV and videocassettes, is ultimately all about. Not Polaroid movies.<sup>300</sup>

Reflecting the aims of the media arts center movement, Shamberg calls for the creation of new information infrastructures that support local and regional media production, referred to here as “grassroots television” that “works with people, not from up above them.”<sup>301</sup> *Guerrilla Television* is also described as “Do-It-Yourself Television” or “two-way television.” While the meta-manual outlines this philosophy, advocating for the development of an infrastructure for supporting the production of media at this level, the manual also addresses the practical use of the technology to meet these ends.

With its emphasis on technology, the “Manual” section of *Guerrilla Television* is similar to other filmmaking manuals published at this time. The tools and technology of media production are described in great detail: how to select the right medium, use the technology,

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<sup>300</sup> Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*, 27.

<sup>301</sup> Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*, 8

manipulate the image, secure funding and distribution outlets, and provide training for others. However, youth oriented workshops are described here as well. These workshops demonstrate a particular concern for providing technology training for the next generation of Americans growing up in a media saturated world. The workshops described here emphasize the creation of media as a community activity.<sup>302</sup> Unlike the traditional training manuals, *Guerrilla Television* reflects the aims of the media arts center movement, which was seeking to develop regional resources for local media creation. Access (having the means to create media) and distribution (having the work seen by an audience) are the primary concerns here. However, *Guerrilla Television* is also about the creation of a larger infrastructure supporting these functions. The manual discusses the creation of storefront theaters, localized networks in apartment buildings, mobile screenings, as well as the use of public access cable, suggesting the use of media technology in creative ways.

Another interesting example of these manuals is *The Spaghetti City Video Manual: A Guide to Use, Repair and Maintenance* published by media center and video collective VideoFreex in 1973. This publication is less manifesto and more manual, the opposite of Shamberg's *Guerrilla Television*. Much like the traditional production guides, the manual opens with a discussion of the hardware and software of media production, designed to "open up some options for people who want to become more self-sufficient with their video hardware."<sup>303</sup> The manual is divided into four sections (Theory, Systems, Basic Maintenance and, Not So Basic Maintenance), introducing the basics of video technology from the hardware and software systems, from how a video signal is encoded onto the magnetic media, to discussions of editing,

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<sup>302</sup> Community is defined as "geographic or demographic." Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*, 58.

<sup>303</sup> VideoFreex, *The Spaghetti City Video Manual: A Guide to Use, Repair, and Maintenance* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 1.

broadcasting, and distribution. Like *Guerrilla Television*, the VideoFreex's manual is directed towards those users who may be unfamiliar with "video spaghetti," that is all of the wires, cables, connectors and other hardware associated with video production, which is "unfamiliar because the 'how' and 'why' of it hasn't been available in any comprehensive form," especially to those working with the "low-cost" technologies available to amateurs and independents.<sup>304</sup>

These manuals aim to educate potential users of media technology, providing a how-to guide for the use of media technologies, while advocating for new uses of the tools of the commercial media. While media arts centers provide access to these tools, the manuals described here demonstrate that a certain knowledge and understanding of the technology was required as well. This skill set is often referred to as 'visual literacy' or 'media literacy.'

## **6.2 VISUAL AND MEDIA LITERACY**

The visual literacy movement was contemporaneous to the media arts center movement. Educator John L. Debes is credited with introducing the concept of visual literacy in the early 1960s. Visual literacy emerged as a concern for school-aged children who were coming of age in a media dominated environment – particularly television. Debes suggests a hierarchy of skills that a visually literate person should possess, including the ability to distinguish: light from dark, differences in brightness, similarities in shape and size, hues from grays, distance, height, and depth. Also included in these competencies is the ability to interpret and describe sequences of

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<sup>304</sup> VideoFreex, *The Spaghetti City Video Manual*, 2. "Spaghetti" is in reference to a skit from the Tonite Show with Jack Parr where Italian peasants were harvesting spaghetti from a Spaghetti Tree. The manual explain that viewers unfamiliar with the "technology of spaghetti" didn't understand the joke.

images and body language.<sup>305</sup> The emphasis here is on the ability to interpret visual cues and elements of visual modes of communication, as Debes explains:

Visual Literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication.<sup>306</sup>

Visual literacy in this sense focuses on the skills necessary to 'read' or interpret the visual elements of an image. These are skills that the consumer of images must possess to make sense of the informational content of the image. Debes presumes that interpreting an image requires a different skill set and knowledge, that not unlike reading text, must be learned.

This same skill set is emphasized in the archival literature. Visual literacy here is described as "the ability to understand and use images and to think and learn in terms of images."<sup>307</sup> Similarly, these definitions are written for consumers of images, and not makers, emphasizing the skills required to interpret the information within a photograph or moving image, rather than an understanding of the technologies required to make such images. The concept of visual literacy from this perspective assumes that one should be able to interpret the messages encoded on visual media, the informational content.

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<sup>305</sup> John L. Debes, "The Loom of Visual Literacy: An Overview," *Audiovisual Instruction* 14, no. 8 (1969): 25-26. Debes founded the International Visual Literacy Association in 1969.

<sup>306</sup> International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA), "What is 'Visual Literacy?,'" accessed January, 21, 2014, [www.ivla.org/drupal2/content/what-visual-literacy-o](http://www.ivla.org/drupal2/content/what-visual-literacy-o).

<sup>307</sup> Elisabeth Kaplan and Jeffrey Mifflin, "'Mind and Sight': Visual Literacy and the Archivist," in *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice*, ed. Randall Jimerson (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2000), 73.

In 2011 the Board of Directors of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) endorsed the “Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education,” which suggests new literacy skills required for the twenty-first century, as “new digital technologies have made it possible for almost anyone to create and share visual media.” The visual literacy competencies are designed to complement and build upon the ACRL’s “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” with a focus on visual information.<sup>308</sup> The ACRL defines visual literacy as “ a set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media.” These skills “equip a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials.”<sup>309</sup> Here, visual literacy includes both the technical skills required to create visual media, as well as those skills necessary to interpret and use such materials. As with other definitions of visual literacy, the ACRL competencies seek to establish educational standards that support the development of “critical consumers” of visual media who can become “competent contributor(s) to a body of shared knowledge and culture.”

By including the skill-set necessary to create media alongside those necessary to use and interpret visual media, the ACRL recognizes the need for literate individuals to not only read, but also write with visual media. In this sense, this definition overlaps with definitions of media literacy, a similar concept that includes the “knowledge, skills, and competencies that are required in order to use and interpret media.” Here media is broadly defined, including all

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<sup>308</sup> The “ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” may be accessed at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency>. The Standards were first approved by the board in 2000 and are currently under revision.

<sup>309</sup> Association of College and Research Libraries, “ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education,” accessed January 18, 2014, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/visuallitearcy>.

“visual and aural forms of communication,” – video, television, cinema, radio, photography, advertising, newspapers and magazines, recorded music, computer games, and the Internet.<sup>310</sup>

The National Association for Media Literacy Education similarly suggests that media literacy is a “necessary, inevitable, and realistic response to the complex, ever-changing electronic environment and communication cornucopia that surround us.”<sup>311</sup> Unlike visual literacy, media literacy is more often connected with the competencies of media creation, closely associated with media production courses and workshops offered to non-professionals, particularly school-aged children, while visual literacy is often used in context of consuming images on television or in print.

With the ACRL’s updated guidelines, both media and visual literacy suggest a level of technical competency with the visual materials. These skills have also been described as “technological literacy.” This set of competencies is commonly associated with the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), however contextualizing technology in this way limits the scope of how ‘technology’ is defined. ‘Technology’ often connotes “high-tech” technologies, rather than acknowledging other cultural objects such as books, photographs, and indigenous artifacts.<sup>312</sup> Broadly defined, technology includes “everything that humans do or make to change the natural environment to suit their own purposes,” yet technological literacy

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<sup>310</sup> David Buckingham, *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2003), 36, 3.

<sup>311</sup> National Association for Media Literacy Education, “Media Literacy Defined,” accessed March 31, 2014, <http://name.net/publications/media-literacy-definitions>.

<sup>312</sup> Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner, “Reconstructing Technoliteracy” in John R. Drakers, ed., *Defining Technological Literacy: Towards an Epistemological Framework* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 255. See also, Elsa M. Garmire and Greg Pearson, *Tech Tally Approaches to Assessing Technological Literacy* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2006). This study cites a 2004 Gallup poll where 86% of respondents equated “computers” with the term “technology” an additional 5% responded with “electronics.”

remains closely connected to scientific literacy, historical literacy, and design thinking.<sup>313</sup> Broadly defined, technological literacy is, “general understanding of technology... developed enough so that a person can function effectively in a technology-dependent society where rapid technological change is the norm.”<sup>314</sup> Similar to media literacy, technological literacy assumes that one has a basic knowledge about the design and use of the technology, the ability to use technology, as well as the ability to “think critically” about technology and its impact on society. In each of these examples ‘literacy’ is used as a means for defining a set of skills to be taught in conjunction with reading and writing that assist the ‘reader’ with the ability to understand both the technology and its products as socially constructed.

As this brief survey of literacies demonstrates, these are fluid and dynamic terms whose meanings have changed and adapted to the technological landscape over time. The International Visual Literacy Association suggests that it is the interdisciplinary nature of visual literacy that has lead to the variances among definitions of the concept; as society shapes the use and development of new technologies, new literacies continue to evolve.<sup>315</sup> Despite these variances, these concepts acknowledge the need for a different set of skills and knowledge to work with and interpret the various communications employed in our day-to-day lives.

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<sup>313</sup> Garmire and Pearson, *Tech Tally Approaches to Assessing Technological Literacy*, 29.

<sup>314</sup> Garmire and Pearson, *Tech Tally Approaches to Assessing Technological Literacy*, 32.

<sup>315</sup> “Multimodal literacy” combines aspects of each of these literacies acknowledging that communication occurs in hybrid forms of text and image both still and moving. See Peggy Albers and Jennifer Sanders, eds., *Literacies, the Arts & Multimodality* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2010); Carey Jewitt and Gunther Kress, eds., *Multimodal Literacy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003); and David R. Cole and Darren L. Pullen, eds., *Multiliteracies in Motion: Current Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2010).



These technologies, their products, and artifacts must be critically consumed, not passively used, to enable the democratic use and access of these technologies by all. The educational missions of each of the cases in this study support a similar concept of visual and media literacy.

### 6.3 VISUAL LITERACY AND MEDIA ARTS CENTERS

*People are very media-aware – how to translate that into new roles for media arts centers? New kinds of networks are coming into being, and media arts centers will be key players in that process. There’s been a real democratizing of video in the last five or six years: there are a few million camcorders out there now. How do media arts centers fit in? As editing centers for public use? As downlink centers? When they figure it out, it will bring new money, new ideas, and new blood into the field.”<sup>316</sup>*

Whether defined as technological, media, or visual literacy, by promoting these skills media arts centers promote the reading and writing of culture with media technologies. Literacy, as described in the context of media arts centers, takes the form of “critical media literacy,” that “teaches students to learn from media, to resist media manipulation, and to use media materials in constructive ways,” while “concerned with developing skills that will help create good citizens and make them more motivated and competent participants in social life.”<sup>317</sup> The development of how-to manuals, like those published by Shamberg and the Videofreex, is just one of the methods of media literacy instruction employed by media arts centers. Through media production, education initiatives, and exhibition, the media arts centers in this study embrace

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<sup>316</sup> Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *The Bottom Line: Funding For Media Arts Organizations* (San Francisco: National Alliance of Media Arts Centers, 1991), 44.

<sup>317</sup> Kahn and Kellner, “Reconstructing Technoliteracy,” 264.

literacy as part of their mission create an informed audience of media consumers and producers who can use media to enact change.

### 6.3.1 Programming Literacy

The traditional approaches to visual literacy emphasize the reading and interpretation of visual media over producing or writing media. Paper Tiger Television's first programming series operated on this philosophy, developing programming that critiqued the media being broadcast by commercial networks and teaching viewers to become active consumers of media, as stated in the Paper Tiger Manifesto:

Paper Tiger Television is a public access TV show. It looks at the communications industry via the media in all of their forms. The power of mass culture rests on the trust of the public. This legitimacy is a paper tiger. Investigation into the corporate structures of the media and critical analysis of their content is one way to demystify the information industry. Developing a critical consciousness about the communications industry is a necessary first step towards democratic control of information resources.<sup>318</sup>

Founded by a group of activist artists with a desire to “smash the myths of the information industry,” Paper Tiger sought to challenge the messages broadcast by commercial television. Here, the program becomes a means for educating critical consumers, who may then be inspired to take up the same tools to create their own media.

The first Paper Tiger Television episodes achieved these aims in two ways, first, as open readings of ‘the media’ on *Communications Update*. Opening with the question “It’s 8:30 do you know where your brains are?,” this weekly program, invited guests to perform a critical reading of the mass media. In each episode, a new critic (communications theorists, film

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<sup>318</sup> Paper Tiger Television Collective, *Roar: The Paper Tiger Television Guide To Media Activism* (New York: Paper Tiger Television Collective, 1991), 9.

scholars, and sociologists) read aloud from publications such as *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Newsweek*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, openly critiquing the printed mass media. While the collective recognized that many people were skeptical of the messages broadcast by ‘the media,’ there was an assumption that a critical viewer must be taught to read between the lines so to speak, to look beyond the polished messages in these popular media outlets: “The next time a viewer reads a publication that was covered on Paper Tiger, each ad and each article becomes a reinforcement of the critical reading.”<sup>319</sup>

Along with this discussion of the informational content of media products, the visual aesthetics of the show also attempted to demystify the production of television. Founding Tiger DeeDee Halleck explained that many cable access shows mimicked the aesthetic of commercial broadcasts – setting up panels of speakers in-front of plain backdrops, mimicking a news broadcast, or placing interviewees between two ferns against a black backdrop for a chat-show style interview. Paper Tiger broke this mold, creating colorful hand-made sets and props and allowing for other production “transgressions” to be broadcast (e.g. sound cues and camera shots of the crew). This do-it-yourself aesthetic encouraged others to attempt to create their own sets and develop programming without matching the polished aesthetics of commercial television. As described by collective members, the “cartoony backdrops, hand-held graphics, and handmade feel [were] designed to inspire viewers to believe that they [could] make media too.”<sup>320</sup> In addition to these aesthetic elements, the exact cost of the production was also

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<sup>319</sup> Paper Tiger Television Collective, *Roar*, 32.

<sup>320</sup> Paper Tiger Television Collective, *Roar*, 10, 31. This DIY aesthetic carries through to the internal and external publications produced by the collective. Internal documents such as meeting minutes were distributed to collective members mimeographed with stamped and hand-drawn graphics. Examples can be found in the archival materials housed at the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University. Images of the props and sets from the collective’s thirtieth anniversary exhibit at New York University’s Bobst Library can be found at “Paper Tiger Exhibit,” <http://www.papertigerexhibit.blogspot.com>.

publicized at the end of each episode to emphasize the ease in which community television could be made. Both the critical reading and the DIY aesthetics of the show served as Brechtian means of breaking down the ‘third wall’ and creating a space for viewers to think more critically about the production of media.

Termite Television embraces a similar production philosophy, suggesting in their manifesto, “the observer is part of the experiment.”<sup>321</sup> Like Paper Tiger Television, Termite Television productions embrace a playful, un-polished aesthetic. Termite Television’s first experiment was the series *This is Only A Test*, broadcast on Drexel University’s cable access channel DUTV. Each collective member produced a segment of a twenty-eight minute episode centered on a particular theme or topic. *This is Only a Test* critiqued representations of gender, consumerism, and television, as well as national elections and local politics.<sup>322</sup> The 1992 “Gulf War” program exemplified this particular Termite model. In this iteration of *This is Only a Test*, cable news footage was repurposed and remixed as viewers are asked to look at these mainstream representations in a new way.

Like Paper Tiger, Termite re-uses commercial media and transforms it, critiquing the messages being broadcast as a means for educating passive consumers of media. As co-founder Michael Kuetemeyer explained, “the Termite way of looking... is not meant to be sharp.” Termite productions demonstrate the playfulness and resourcefulness of the collective. Much like Paper Tiger’s handmade props the unpolished aesthetic of Termite TV is part necessity and part transparency. Kuetemeyer suggested, perhaps “hooking-in the audience is not what you’re after.” The Termite Way of Looking is intended to leave the audience with questions and a sense

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<sup>321</sup> Termite Television Collection, “About,” accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.termite.org/info/description.html>.

<sup>322</sup> See Termite Television’s season one and two programming, available at <http://www.termite.org/video.html>.

that the problem hasn't been solved, as a means for inspiring the audience to take action. Like *Paper Tiger* the flaws are emphasized so that the viewer becomes an active participant in the creation of meaning.

At first glance, Pittsburgh Filmmakers appears to emulate the passive modes of viewership constructed by commercial media outlets. While independently produced, the media created here often strives for the polished look of commercial media products. While Pittsburgh Filmmakers specializes in exhibiting productions that are not distributed to multiplexes and commercially owned movie-houses, Pittsburgh Filmmakers' theaters reinforce the established look-and-feel of the commercialized moving-going experience. However, Pittsburgh Filmmakers also supports modes of exhibition that support the active engagement of audiences within these traditional venues.

Film Kitchen functions much like a small-scale film festival. The monthly screening started with the vision of Bill O'Driscoll, Arts and Entertainment Editor of Pittsburgh's *City Paper*, about fifteen years ago as an outlet for the local film and video. On the second Tuesday of every month, Pittsburgh Filmmakers hosts a curated screening of regional film and video at the Melwood Screening Room. Current curator, Matthew Day explained that in many cases, Film Kitchen may be the only public screening for these independent works.<sup>323</sup> The screenings draw crowds from fifteen to fifty, usually including the friends and family of the exhibiting artists.

While Film Kitchen supports the exhibition of local work, the screening venue also establishes a feedback loop between audience and artist. At each screening the curator introduces the works to be presented and his rationale for selecting each film or video. After the

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<sup>323</sup> Matthew Day, interview with the author, August 23, 2013.

work has been screened a conversation begins between curator, artist, and audience. This is an example of active and critical media consumption; the audience may ask questions in an open forum with the media artist. During the September 2013 Film Kitchen, audience members asked questions about particular aesthetic choices, the details of production, as well as the motivations and inspirations for the presented works. In *Guerrilla Television*, Shamberg argued for similar mechanisms establishing a two-way communication in traditional media outlets observing, “there is no feeding back into broadcast television; you can call up a radio talk show but the announcer usually works you over; and there’s only so many times you can write a ‘letter-to-the-editor.’”<sup>324</sup> Film Kitchen creates a feedback loop at this basic level, supporting the exhibition of local media and a means of directly communicating with the producer of the work.

Film Kitchen is part of a larger history of visiting artists at Pittsburgh Filmmakers. Throughout the organization’s history, visiting filmmakers have been part of Pittsburgh Filmmakers’ educational mission. In his history of independent film in Pittsburgh, Robert Haller suggests that the “broad, alert, and curious audience that responded to films,” was one of the city’s assets, fostering a rich film culture in Pittsburgh.<sup>325</sup> Pulling from the flow of visiting artists screening at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh Filmmakers hosted filmmakers such as Jonas Mekas, Bruce Baillie, Guvnor Nelson, Kenneth Anger, and Stan Brakhage.<sup>326</sup> The workshops and screenings hosted by filmmakers created opportunities for the audience of student-filmmakers and local film-enthusiasts to engage in conversations with these established artists.

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<sup>324</sup> Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*, 12.

<sup>325</sup> Robert A. Haller, *Crossroads: Avant-garde Film in Pittsburgh in the 1970s* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2005), 8.

<sup>326</sup> For a timeline of Carnegie screenings and corresponding Pittsburgh Filmmakers events see, Haller, *Crossroads*, 25-27.

### 6.3.2 Enacting Literacy

While production and exhibition within these media arts centers support the ‘reading’ competencies of visual literacy, through workshops and other modes of community engagement these organizations also support the ‘writing’ competencies of media literacy. Of these three cases, Pittsburgh Filmmakers offers the most formalized opportunities for its constituency to develop these media literacy skills. Founded as an artist co-op at the Selma Burke Arts Center, equipment access has been at the core of the Pittsburgh Filmmakers’ mission from the beginning. From this small, local resource, Pittsburgh Filmmakers now provides equipment access to hundreds of artist-members. As an equipment access facility, the organization serves as a media lab for the entire region. The equipment office maintains photography, filmmaking, and video-making equipment, for both contemporary media formats and obsolete media as well.<sup>327</sup>

This technology training is central to the media literacy initiatives developed by the organization. Pittsburgh Filmmakers defines media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms, enabling individuals to become critical consumers and thoughtful creators.”<sup>328</sup> While Pittsburgh Filmmakers is a source of technology for those already proficient in its use, as a school the organization provides educational opportunities for college students as well as the general public. Courses cover all modes of media production from filmmaking and darkroom techniques, to digital video production and web design. Whether targeting adult students or school-aged children, literacy skills are taught by working with the technology. This hands-on instruction is supplemented by the screenings

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<sup>327</sup> Pittsburgh Filmmakers has served as a resource for local archives in the past, providing playback and inspection equipment for film and video technology.

<sup>328</sup> Pittsburgh Arts, “Pittsburgh Filmmakers Youth Media Program,” accessed April 16, 2014, [http://pca.pittsburgharts.org/education/young\\_adult](http://pca.pittsburgharts.org/education/young_adult).

and other exhibition venues, continuing the organization's mission to support literate audiences in the Pittsburgh region.

Media literacy is also central to the mission of the Paper Tiger Television collective:

Through the production and distribution of our public access series, media literacy/video production workshops, community screenings and grassroots advocacy PTTV works to challenge and expose the corporate control of mainstream media. PTTV believes that increasing public awareness of the negative influence of mass media and involving people in the process of making media is mandatory for our long-term goal of information equity.<sup>329</sup>

While Paper Tiger has abandoned the *Communications Update* format for other documentary forms, the collective continues to challenge and critique commercial media outlets by creating programming focused on specific social issues and communities that may not be represented in the mainstream media.<sup>330</sup> These programs are broadcast on community cable access television, screened in community centers and spaces, and are available on the web, continuing the collective's mission to create an informed public of critical consumers of media. In addition to this programming, the collective has also produced hands on technology workshops for the community, addressing the additional technological competencies of media literacy.

When the collective has the time, interest, and resources available, Paper Tiger has hosted media literacy workshops in partnership with various community groups. The first of these workshops was hosted at the Satellite Academy High School in 1989 as part of the "Through Our

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<sup>329</sup> Paper Tiger Television, "Mission," accessed April 1, 2014, <http://papertiger.org/mission>.

<sup>330</sup> The collective's distribution catalog allows you to search across categories such as, health, labor, LGBTQ Perspectives, the Middle East, Race and Class, and Youth, among others. The full catalog may be accessed online at <http://papertiger.org/search/video>.



Eyes Video History Project.”<sup>331</sup> These seminars were offered more frequently in the 1990s and early 2000s when the collective had a larger membership and funding to support such projects. A 1998 document from the annual Paper Tiger retreat described a project titled “Analog Media in a Digital World: Discussions with Communities” in which screenings of “low-tech shows” would be followed by a lecture addressing the particular technologies of low-tech media production. The document also announced “Literacy, Creation, Action,” a project funded by the Manhattan Neighborhood Network that included a series of community video workshops which incorporated “PPTV’s unique media literacy knowledge with techniques for teaching adults and young people about media production which [could] be used for social change.”<sup>332</sup> During these workshops, Paper Tiger Television shared its technological resources and expertise to teach community groups how to use video technology to tell their own stories.

In addition to these formal workshops, Paper Tiger has published its own Shamberg-style manual, *ROAR: The Paper Tiger Television Guide to Media Activism*, bringing this technological training to a wider public. Like *Guerrilla Television*, *ROAR* seeks to empower “camcorder guerrillas” and “commandos” to create “cheap media” or “bargain Media” and broadcast that media through alternative outlets.

Like Shamberg’s manual, *ROAR* is part manual and part manifesto. The opening chapters, “Do You Know Where Your Brains Are?” and “Paper Tiger and Friends,” outline the history and the philosophy of the organization. The remainder of the manual contains features

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<sup>331</sup> Paper Tiger has also partnered with Streetwork, Queeruption, S.O.S. Hati, More Gardens!, The Point, Lower East Side Girls Club, Green Chimneys Gramercy, Malcom X Grassroots collective, Fast is a Lesbian Issue (F.L.A.B.) and JustAct. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Youth Digital Media Proposal, n.d.; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 12; folder 32; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

<sup>332</sup> PTTV Retreat in Willow, NY, August 14-15, 1998; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 4; folder 40; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries. The document outlines a series of workshops to be held in the Spring of 1999.

such as “How to Use Community Access Channels” and “Making TV is Easy and Fun” that provide accessible instructions and advice to empower communities to use these technologies and resources. The final section is simply titled “How To,” including articles that address the nuts and bolts of production, from the playful “A Recipe for Tasty TV: What You Need to Know to Make a Show” and “Fiona’s Hand Camcorder Hints,” to the highly technical “How to Build a FM Radio Transmitter.” *ROAR* is a complete manual for community media production, covering the practical elements of production, how to manage people and work together, how to gain access to distribution channels, how to secure funding and resources, as well as how to use and maintain media technology.

In contrast to the formal workshops and educational opportunities at Pittsburgh Filmmakers and Paper Tiger Television, Termite Television’s emphasis on experimentation has lead to the development of several projects that directly engage the community in the process of production. While Pittsburgh Filmmakers serves as a physical media lab for its members, as a think-tank Termite Television is a laboratory for experimenting with new modes of engagement for the community. The media literacy initiatives here have evolved from Termite’s templates for production like “Life Stories.”

As described in the previous chapter, the Life Stories model evolved from the collective’s 1999 “Living Documentary Tour.” Formulated as a means for quickly connecting the community, the 5-minute Life Story model also has the power to engage the documentarian behind the camera, as little technological know-how is needed to produce a Life Story. The set-up requires little more than a video camera and tripod, and requires no editing or post-production work. The immediacy of the project has made it a go-to model for youth and community

oriented workshops, and has been reformulated for projects like Messages in Motion.<sup>333</sup> In this Termite experiment, a van outfitted with video production equipment travels throughout the Philadelphia area providing technology instruction to community groups and schools. Participants learn how to use the tools of media production while creating 5-minute “video-postcards” documenting their neighborhood or organization. The collective has also developed a “Messages in Motion” zine that provides step-by-step instructions for members of the public not participating in the project.<sup>334</sup>

Other Termite templates have been utilized to teach media literacy skills as well. Collective member Michael Kuetemeyer has used the segmented structure of Termite’s cable access program *This is Not a Test* as a means for Temple University students to collaborate in the classroom. Anula Shetty suggested that the other Termite projects, such as the Walk Philly template, could also be used in this context. “Walk Philly” is a 2010 Termite initiative which partnered with local artists and historians to create a series of guided smart-phone walking tours of Philadelphia. Shetty suggested that if simplified, the Walk Philly model could serve as an additional template for community-based media production.<sup>335</sup> These Termite experiments, repurposed as media literacy initiatives support the development of both the reading and writing skills suggested by the ACRL guidelines by engaging the community in the production of media.

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<sup>333</sup> Anula Shetty (Termite Television co-director), interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

<sup>334</sup> Termite Television, “Messages in Motion Toolkit,” [http://messagesinmotion.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/mim\\_toolkit1.pdf](http://messagesinmotion.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/mim_toolkit1.pdf).

<sup>335</sup> Anula Shetty and Michael Kuetemeyer (Termite Television co-directors), interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

## 6.4 READING AND WRITING MEDIA

Through these literacy initiatives, media arts centers seek to foster what Lawrence Lessig has described as a Read/Write culture in the Read/Only environment of commercial media production.<sup>336</sup> In these three cases, both reading and writing media are emphasized as the participants in the initiatives described here engage both the media texts and media technology through first-hand experience.

These initiatives also meet the larger goals of media arts center movement. By engaging the community, these projects not only help to create new audiences for media but support the use of media arts centers as alternative systems of distribution and production. Just as preservation centered on access in the preceding chapter, access is a priority here as well. Not merely access to alternative media products or to the technology and tools of media creation, but access to the knowledge of how to produce media and how to gain entry into a read/only culture saturated by commercial interests. More than mere independent production of art for art's sake, or amateur media created by hobbyists, this is do-it-yourself media with a purpose, as described by representatives of the National Alliance of Media Arts Centers:

It seems that a field is beginning to emerge from where a fringe artistic movement once flourished. Our profile is low because we have lived too long in the margins. We have allowed ourselves to be perceived as a community who cares more about chroma and digital processors and artistic angst than we care about free speech, educating kids, or fighting injustice. The best way to improve support for the field is to raise our profile, and the best way to raise our profile is to use our facilities and our talents to make life in our communities better.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 28. Lessig's analogy "is to the permissions that might attach to a particular file on a computer. If the user has 'RW' permissions, then he is allowed to both read the file and make changes to it. If he has Read/Only permissions, he is allowed only to read the file."

<sup>337</sup> Adams and Goldbard, *The Bottom Line*, 46.

Media creation becomes a tool for community engagement, community power, and a means for documenting communities from the community's point of view. The media produced here by the community or for the community, becomes part of the archives contained within these media arts centers. As creators, distributors, and preservers of audiovisual media, outreach and access looks different in media arts centers when compared to traditional archival institutions. While traditional archives provide access to materials, media arts centers serve a dual role both preserving and producing media. These community spaces are dynamic archival spaces where makers build from the archives, constantly reframing and reinterpreting previous works and the archive as a whole. Here archivists are both consumers and producers of the archives. This dual role of creator/archivist opens archival practice, creating a do-it-yourself archival space where the community dictates how the archive takes shape. The following chapter will further explore these themes, suggesting a democratic and pluralized approach to archival practice.

## 7.0 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AS ALTERNATIVE ARCHIVES

*Now everyone can have their own archive, especially a personal one. (All the Instamatic pictures locked up in closets will boggle the minds of future historians).*<sup>338</sup>

*The more process-oriented an information medium is, the sillier it seems as a product. That's why we approve of book collecting, indulge people who collect old magazines, and lock up people who hoard old newspapers.*<sup>339</sup>

The work of training communities to use media technology has been the long established mission of media arts centers, as a contributor to NAMAC's *Media Information Network* reported in 1991, "through workshops and seminars we helped demystify television and film, and through equipment access we made it possible for communities to use low-budget video as a tool to present their ideas, aesthetics and issues."<sup>340</sup> As the previous chapter demonstrated, this access to tools, technology, and alternative media provided by media arts centers is a means for building a literate audience for non-commercial media and empowering communities to tell their own stories. As collectors and keepers of this media, media arts centers have also become sites where these histories are preserved, retold, and reimagined.

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<sup>338</sup> Michael Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 43.

<sup>339</sup> Shamberg, *Guerrilla Television*, 11.

<sup>340</sup> Hye Jung Park, "We Have No Choice," *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (September 1991): 8.

## 7.1 THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

As suggested in Chapter 5, Janet Ceja Acala's "imperfect archive" legitimizes the preservation practices established within media arts centers, however the concept of community archives provides a more robust framework for understanding the various archival functions that have developed within media arts centers. More than mere sites of preservation, the media arts centers in this study represent attempts to form, retain, and provide access to materials over time. This may be in the instance of a single film, as with Pittsburgh Filmmakers' efforts with *Pittsburgh*, or with the creation of an archive documenting the work and history of an entire organization, as is the case with Termite Television and Paper Tiger Television.

The concept of community archives is as multifarious as the concept of the media arts center. Andrew Flinn has suggested that the concept of community is a "fluid and ambiguous one, lacking in clear definition and employed in many different contexts."<sup>341</sup> Communities, as defined here, may be bound by geographic location, ethnic structures, cultural groups, or a variety of other social structures self-defined through a common identity. The concept of community archives includes a variety of constructs from local history groups and projects, to independent community archives. Community archives may be completely independent or may partner with established cultural heritage institutions such as, archives, museums, or libraries.<sup>342</sup>

The use of 'archive' in 'community archives' is equally contested, calling into question the nature of the archive and the documentation within it. One objection to the use of the term relates to the ephemeral nature of the materials often found in community collections,

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<sup>341</sup> Andrew Flinn, "Archival Activism: Independent and Community-led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011): 5.

<sup>342</sup> See Chapter 2 for a review of the community archives literature.

“photographs, flyers, leaflets and so on,” which “often fail to meet archivists’ strict criteria for authenticity, integrity, reliability, usability and completeness, which constitute archival ‘value’.”<sup>343</sup> Such objections, Flinn argues, “reflect an attempt to establish a significant stake and responsibility for this area of activity [archival practice]” by archival professionals.<sup>344</sup> As such, community archives are placed in opposition to formal archival institutions that uphold the established standards of archival practice. In this light, community archives are the products of amateurs, relegated to the periphery of archivry. This concept is instead intended to be “broad, non-prescriptive, and inclusive,” as a means for pluralizing archival practice.<sup>345</sup> It is the inclusiveness of Flinn’s concept that is significant here. This is a concept centered on self-definition. Both the community and the archive are self-defined, and as such, archivists cannot place professional boundaries on this construct.

Broadly defined, ‘community archive’ refers to “collections of materials gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control.”<sup>346</sup> The physical location of the materials, that is whether or not they are housed in a formal archival institution, is less of a concern. Rather, it is the “active and ongoing involvement of members of the source community in documenting and making accessible their history *on their own terms*,” which defines community archives.<sup>347</sup> Flinn’s definition of community archives centers on community engagement and involvement. It is the community

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<sup>343</sup> Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd, “New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector: From Handing Over to Handing On,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, nos. 1-2 (January/March 2010): 60.

<sup>344</sup> Flinn, “Archival Activism,” 6.

<sup>345</sup> Flinn, “Archival Activism,” 6.

<sup>346</sup> Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd, “New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector,” 60.

<sup>347</sup> Stevens, Flinn, and Shepherd, “New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector,” 60.



that initiates the archival activity and controls the ownership of the materials, and thus controls the representation of the community and its story through the archive.

Such a broad definition of community archives risks diminishing the political aims of many community archives, archives such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives, that stand in opposition to traditional archival constructs by representing the histories of communities underrepresented or excluded from traditional archival institutions. But, the inclusiveness of community archives from this perspective opens the concept to include the archives developed by communities of practice, such as the archive of the Grateful Dead “taping community” that developed an archive of illicit audiotapes of live performances through a shared common practice.<sup>348</sup> In this sense, community archives are defined by the development of archival practices (collection, curation, and control, as suggested by Wallace) within a particular community. When defined by practice rather than by community affiliation, the community archivist closely aligns with the concept of the citizen archivist, defined by Rick Prelinger as “a person working *outside* established institutions who is doing archival-quality work (not simply collecting), typically in an area that is neglected or inadequately addressed by established collections.”<sup>349</sup> Understood in this way, community archives are a means for acknowledging the deliberate attempts of communities and community organizations to preserve, represent, and provide continued access to their histories.

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<sup>348</sup> See Chapter 2 for further discussion of Wallace’s study. David A. Wallace, “Co-Creation of the Grateful Dead Sound Archive: Control, Access and Curation Communities,” in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, eds. Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander, 169-193 (London: Facet Publishing, 2009).

<sup>349</sup> As quoted in, Ned Thanouser, “Reconstructing Thanouser: The Twenty-Five-Year Journey of a Citizen Archivist,” *The Moving Image* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 99, note 13.

## 7.2 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AS COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Media arts centers support both concepts of community as described in the community archives discourse. Through supporting the production and exhibition of media, media arts centers create a community of practice brought together by the shared practice of media creation. All three of the organizations in this study share an alternative organizational structure that supports the development of community among its artist-members. Operating on a collective model, Paper Tiger Television and Termite Television are supported by a small group of dedicated artists volunteering their time and expertise to produce and create original programming. With its roots as a filmmakers' co-op and equipment rental service, Pittsburgh Filmmakers also remains dedicated to an open organizational structure, operating on a membership model. Like the collectives, voting artist-members of Pittsburgh Filmmakers are given a share of responsibility in the administration of the organization. Defined as a mutual undertaking by a group of individuals that share a common set of communal resources, this sharing of administrative responsibility, expertise, technology, and communal production and exhibition space is consistent with the concept of communities of practice.<sup>350</sup>

While media arts centers bring together communities of artists, these centers also embrace the broader notions of community through supporting the creation of what can be described as community media. This concept "refers to grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives."<sup>351</sup> Community media embraces the idea of a community being empowered by media technology through the control of communication channels, the means of representing

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<sup>350</sup> As defined by sociologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Etienne Wenger, "Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System." *Systems Thinker* 9, no. 5 (June 1998): 2.

<sup>351</sup> Kevin Howley, *Community Media: People Places, and Communication Technologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

an alternative point of view, and the ability to shape the representation of the community through media. Former NAMAC director Margaret Capels suggested this support of community production as a powerful role for media arts centers which “can provide not only access to equipment but also access to truth.” These access initiatives provide opportunities for communities to “tak[e] control of telling their own histories and tak[e] control of how they are portrayed ...break[ing] the circle of racism, sexism, and cultural ignorance.”<sup>352</sup> In this way, the media literacy initiatives developed by the cases of this study support this notion of community by placing the technology of media creation into the hands of community members.

These media centers become community archives through their dedication to the documentation and development of community as well as their efforts to preserve the media content generated by community and artist-members. Pittsburgh Filmmakers demonstrates this dedication to the community not only through the educational opportunities provided by the organization, but through screening venues such as Film Kitchen and partnership with local film festivals such as JFilm, the film festival of the Pittsburgh Jewish Film Forum, and Reel Q, the Pittsburgh LGBT film festival. In their activist approach to media production Paper Tiger Television has documented the stories of communities and groups underrepresented by the mainstream media whether co-produced with the community or initiated by the collective. Termite Television’s cooperative production models such as “Life Stories” and “Messages in Motion,” similarly engage the community in media production while documenting the histories and stories of community members. However, it is the collection and preservation of these materials that transforms these media arts centers into community archives.

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<sup>352</sup> Margaret Capels, “From the Board,” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (July/August 1993): 2.

### 7.2.1 Pittsburgh Filmmakers Reframed

Pittsburgh Filmmakers' preservation of *Pittsburgh* illustrates the tensions between preservation as defined by professionals in the audiovisual archival field and the capabilities of media arts centers. Since the organization took custody of the film in 1979, Pittsburgh Filmmakers has remained dedicated to the passive preservation of the thirty thousand feet of original 35mm footage from the film's production. While this passive preservation fails to match the standards for environmental storage established by the preservation fields, these materials have survived, in tact, for the past thirty-five years. Current executive director, Charlie



**Figure 6.** Barrels Housing the 35mm Elements from *Pittsburgh* at Pittsburgh Filmmakers<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Photograph by the author, June 2009.

Humphrey suggested that while the organization does not have the facilities to preserve the film (through proper climate control and the creation of a new film transfer) the organization does archive the film by providing storage facilities for an important piece of Pittsburgh history.<sup>354</sup>

The 2008 grant funding the *Pittsburgh Reframed* project supported an inventory and inspection of the original elements, production of a high definition digital transfer of the film, and scans of a small portion of the outtakes and trims containing the “lost” version of the film. While the quality of these preservation interventions can be debated, what is clear is that the organization has remained dedicated to preserving and providing access to this film within the limits of the resources available. A DVD of the film and the *Reframed* shorts is available for access in the Pittsburgh Filmmakers Library and the high resolution scans of the film are maintained on the organization’s servers and hard drives.

When asked why Pittsburgh Filmmakers retains custody of the film, executive director Charlie Humphrey expressed a sense of responsibility and ownership over the material, arguing, “it belongs here ...not out of a mission, but more out of a deference to *Pittsburgh*, to its history, to its pedigree, to its beauty.”<sup>355</sup> Humphrey also expressed that *Pittsburgh* is more than just a piece of the city’s history, but part of Pittsburgh Filmmaker’s organizational history. While the final cut of the film fails to reflect his artistic vision for the project, filmmaker Stan Brakhage was involved in the production of the film as one of the original directors. During his visits to Pittsburgh, Brakhage was a regular guest of Pittsburgh Filmmakers as a visiting artist and lecturer, described by Humphrey as one of the “patron saints” of the organization. As such, *Pittsburgh* is part of the history of Pittsburgh Filmmakers, a testament to the organization’s

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<sup>354</sup> Interview with the author, July 11, 2013.

<sup>355</sup> Charlie Humphrey, interview with the author, July 11, 2013.

connection to the local and national independent filmmaking culture. *Pittsburgh* is also part of the city's history and cultural heritage as a representation of how the Bicentennial Committee understood the past, present, and future of Pittsburgh. The *Reframed at 250* shorts have been enfolded into this archive as representations of the city, its history, and work of local media artists.

Pittsburgh Filmmakers houses a second collection of archival films, donated in 2003 by underground filmmaker, George Semsel. This second acquisition is somewhat problematic. Semsel explained he donated his collection of 16mm experimental and documentary films to Pittsburgh Filmmakers after failing to identify an archival repository willing to house his collection.<sup>356</sup> The filmmaker acknowledged the work of archives such as Anthology Film



**Figure 7.** The Semsel Archive at Pittsburgh Filmmakers<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> George Semsel, interview with the author, July 19, 2009.

<sup>357</sup> Photograph by the author, June 2009.

Archives, but lamented the loss of the work of filmmakers that has not been preserved in these archival institutions. In a letter accompanying his donation, the filmmaker expressed a desire for the organization to develop a formalized archives program, suggesting these films were “to become part of [Pittsburgh Filmmaker’s] archive.”<sup>358</sup> Semsel’s donation joins a circulating collection of local work collected by the Pittsburgh Filmmakers library. However, these materials are copies, DVDs of student work and other films and videos donated by local artists.<sup>359</sup> Library advisor John Cantine suggested that this curated collection is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of local and regionally produced media in the city.<sup>360</sup>

Echoing Charlie Humphrey’s thoughts regarding *Pittsburgh*, John Cantine explained, “there has always been a faction of people who thought that we should become an archive,” but argued that the organization lacks the resources to establish a formal program. Because the organization cannot meet the standards of the archival community, representatives of Pittsburgh Filmmakers are reluctant to acknowledge the archival role the organization serves for the community. While the materials may not be ‘archival’ in all cases, there are collections being curated and preserved that document the history of the city and media production in the region.

### **7.2.2 The Year of The Tiger: Paper Tiger’s DIY Archive**

In contrast to the informal and somewhat reluctant efforts of Pittsburgh Filmmakers, over the past thirty years Paper Tiger Television has made a deliberate attempt to document the history of the organization and preserve the media created within the collective. The

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<sup>358</sup> Letter from George Semsel to Pittsburgh Filmmakers, March 8, 2003.

<sup>359</sup> Cantine suggested that in recent years it has been more difficult to build this collection as few artists are creating DVDs, opting instead to distribute their work as digital downloads.

<sup>360</sup> John Cantine (faculty advisor to the library), interview with the author August 20, 2013.



**Figure 8.** Paper Tiger Television's Videotape Archive<sup>361</sup>

organization's website suggests, "the PTTV archive houses one of the most unique and important historical alternative media collections, encompassing critical components of the evolution of public access television, video art, video activism, and media reform," indicating a commitment to documenting not only the history of the organization but the larger history of alternative

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<sup>361</sup> Photograph by the author, October 2013.



media.<sup>362</sup> The collective currently maintains a physical archive of over three hundred videotaped programs along with related documentation, artifacts, and ephemera.<sup>363</sup>

As suggested in the discussion of the organization's preservation activities, the development of the archive has been an ongoing effort over the history of the organization. Founding Tiger DeeDee Halleck indicated that the collective had a sense of the significance of their work from the very beginning with the development of *Communications Update*. The success of this early programming effort served as an exemplar of the possibilities for public access television and alternative media, inspiring other communities and groups to create similar programming. The preservation efforts described in the previous chapters serve as one example of the collective's commitment to the Paper Tiger Television Archive. In contrast to Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the collective has made a deliberate attempt to construct an archive and manage the materials within it, as demonstrated in this set of instructions from the Paper Tiger Television Manual:

The Tape Shelf: We have several tape shelves that we use regularly, the ½" tape shelf which house all the VHS copies of our shows, the ¾" tape shelf which house all the tapes we have made up to about 1988 and another ¾" tape shelf which stores all the rest of our tapes up to the present. All the tapes are given numbers and letters for identification purposes and there is a corresponding card catalogue like the kind in libraries situated on the desk. The ¾" shelf is organized so that screening dubs and dub masters are in the front and all masters are either behind them or on the tip top of the shelf. Dub masters and masters are labeled accordingly and should NEVER be screened. If you have any doubts about a particular tape ask a staff person. No tapes leave the office without telling office staff.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Paper Tiger Television, "About Us/History," accessed April 25, 2014, <http://papertiger.org/history>.

<sup>363</sup> An unquantified number of programs have been digitized and are stored on external hard drives and computers along with recent Paper Tiger productions.

<sup>364</sup> Paper Tiger Television Handbook; n.d.; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 4; folder 35; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.

Tapes are physically arranged, to promote both access and preservation, with a clear delineation of the circulating materials from the archival dub masters. The tapes are also clearly identified with an internal cataloging schema and recorded on a card catalog. This internal catalog is distinguished from the distribution “Cat\*a\*log” published for promotional purposes. The card catalog was replaced in the late-1990s by a Filemaker Pro Database of MARC compatible records, further illustrating the collective’s commitment to following the professional library and archival standards wherever possible.

Unlike Pittsburgh Filmmakers, Paper Tiger Television maintains the look-and-feel of an archive. While the collective struggles to maintain archival standards, as illustrated in the discussion of preservation, it is easy to recognize the core archival functions as interpreted by the collective. However, the recent donation of the archive to New York University problematizes the relationship between the collective and its archive, revealing many of the tensions addressed in the community archives literature.

Due to the preservation concerns related to the videotapes in the collection, the Paper Tiger Television archive was donated to the Fales Library and Special Collections in 2010 to become part of the Library’s Downtown Collection. This collection, developed using documentation strategy, includes archival materials from organizations and individuals representing New York City’s art scene in SoHo and the Lower East Side. The donation consisted of sixty linear feet of administrative records, photographs, ephemera and artifacts dating from the collective’s founding year through 2008, along with the collection of master videotapes.

While the paper records and artifacts are open and available for research, the audiovisual materials in the collection have not been processed. In the finding aid, these series are simply

described as “closed for research,” and the materials have not been cataloged or indexed. The collective’s donation provided for the audiovisual materials to be stored in climate-controlled storage, ensuring the continued preservation of the materials, but the videotapes have yet to be digitized, inhibiting access. Patricia González Ramírez explained that collective members can access the materials with permission, but otherwise these materials remain unavailable for research.

This lack of access is a concern for the collective, which understands the productions and programs not only to belong to the collective, but also to the communities that have been documented and represented in these works. González Ramírez explained that the collective “helps communities write their histories,” and therefore, the archive contains not only the history of the collective, but the histories of these communities as well.<sup>365</sup> Due to the inaccessibility of the videotapes, the archives project remains an active Paper Tiger initiative. The Library and Special Collections have been unable to articulate a timeline for digitization, so the collective has decided to move forward with their own project to digitize the copies of their shows that they maintain at their office. As an “Alternative Information Center,” the collective aspires to provide broad and open access to its materials. While documentarians and other commercial filmmakers are charged a fee to license clips from the archive, Paper Tiger grants free access to community groups and activists working with small or non-existent budgets. Collective members suggested that even after the materials have been digitized at Fales, that this tiered access would be desirable.

The institutionalization of Paper Tiger’s archive at New York University has ensured the continued preservation of the videotape materials in cold storage, alleviating one of the

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<sup>365</sup> Patricia González Ramírez, interview with the author, September 26, 2013.

preservation concerns for the materials. However, the donation has raised other concerns related to the continued access and control of the materials. Paper Tiger has relinquished control of the representation of the archives and community access to this collection.<sup>366</sup> Their desire to continue the archives project with the remaining copies demonstrates this sense of ownership and responsibility for this archive of materials documenting histories larger than their own.

### 7.2.3 The Antithetical Archive: Termite TV

The idea of an archive is counter to the philosophy on which Termite Television was founded. Manny Farber's "termite art" should leave no traces, "besides the signs of industrious, unkempt activity," and thus the collective is always moving forward, experimenting with technology, and developing new models for production.<sup>367</sup> This attitude toward archiving reflects the attitudes of respondents in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' *Digital Dilemma 2*, in which independent filmmakers explained that their first concern was the production of new work.<sup>368</sup> Over the past two decades, however, the collective has become aware of the value of maintaining an archive of past projects. As discussed in the previous chapters, this realization came with the production of "The War Show" in 2003 as the collective reflected on the production of 1992's "Desert Storm." By placing these two shows, critiquing

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<sup>366</sup> DeeDee Halleck explained that the Fales Archives and Special Collections was a second choice for the collective. In the late 1990s the collective had also entered negotiations with the Tamiment Institute Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. She believes that by framing the collection within the Downtown collections at Fales, that the political aims of the collective have been diminished. Interview with the author, August 21, 2013.

<sup>367</sup> Michael Kuetemeyer (quoting Manny Farber), interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

<sup>368</sup> Science & Technology Council, *The Digital Dilemma 2: Perspectives from Independent Filmmakers, Documentarians, and Nonprofit Audiovisual Archives* (Beverly Hills, CA: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2012), <http://www.oscars.org/science-technology/council/projects/digitaldilemma2/index.html>,

the politics of two very similar US conflicts in the Middle East, in juxtaposition, the collective realized the potential value of past works leading to an effort to build the Termite Television Archive.

Co-director Anula Shetty explained that the archive was one of the motives for renting a common space for the collective. Prior to 2011 project meetings and other gatherings were hosted in collective members' homes. At this point, the archive was physically distributed among the members of the collective, with no preservation mechanisms in place. As multiple copies of each show were made, there was a general understanding that a copy of each show was being kept by someone associated with the collective or that a copy could be obtained through Termite's distribution channels. Termite's office in the Crane Arts Building became a site for assembling and storing the materials that had gathered in the personal spaces of collective members over the past two decades. While the office became a physical storage space, access to the archive is provided through the collective's website [termite.org](http://termite.org).

[Termite.org](http://Termite.org) is an access point for both current and past Termite projects. The website is used as both a tool to develop and extend interactive, community-based projects such as "Life Stories," "Walk Philly," and "Messages in Motion," as well as a means for advertising and distributing Termite projects past and present. But, [Termite.org](http://Termite.org) is also a tool for archiving these productions and other documentation produced by the collective. The digital archive is represented in two ways: the "Projects" page linking users to descriptions and videos from Termite Television's various projects, and the Termite Television blog, which chronicles the activities of the collective from 1992 to present.

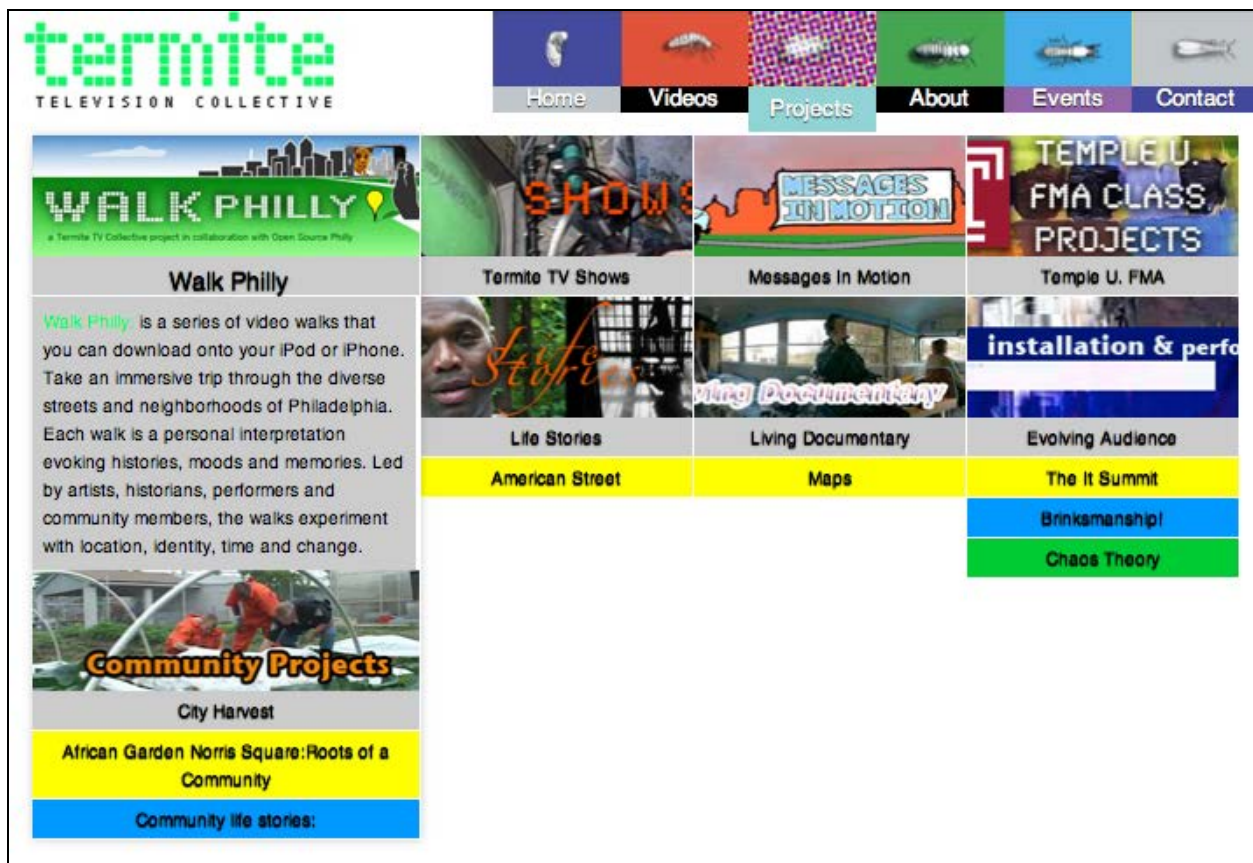


Figure 9. Termite TV "Projects"<sup>369</sup>

<sup>369</sup> Screenshot captured April 26, 2014 from <http://www.termite.org/index.html>.



Figure 10. Termite Television Blog<sup>370</sup>

While the “Projects” page provides a means for accessing the videos and various project documentation, the blog is a self-conscious effort to document the history of the collective. Individual blog posts link to the videos on the “Projects” page as another access point for the productions. These additional links also serve to contextualize the projects in the collective’s larger history. In addition to the project links, the collective has been working to scan other paper-based records to accompany the descriptions and videos on the website. These records are

<sup>370</sup> Screenshot captured April 26, 2014 from <http://www.termite.org/projects.html>.

linked to the salient entries. In addition to these links between entries and records, the blog entries are linked through tags, inputted by collective members as a means of forming additional intellectual connections between entries in this evolving archive.

Like all Termite Television projects, the archive shares the immediacy, spontaneity, and resourcefulness of the Termite aesthetic. This aesthetic applies to the preservation of individual materials contained within the archive, as described in Chapter 5, and the organization and representation of the archive as a whole. To understand the archive, the user must employ the “Termite Way of Looking.” The blog pages do not always load correctly or link to the intended resources. The user must look past these glitches and imperfections in the website to understand it as an archive.

Termite.org can also be read as an experiment in how to preserve, represent and provide access to the collective’s history. Over the history of the development of the digital archive, the collective has made use of freely available software such as Blip, iTunes, and Vimeo, to provide access to the audiovisual materials in the archive.<sup>371</sup> As new platforms are adopted, the old are abandoned leaving a trail of broken links. Rather than reading these artifacts as imperfections or mistakes, they can be understood as part of the experimental ethos of the collective – going “always forward eating its own boundaries, and likely as not, leaves nothing in its path other than the signs of eager, industrious, unkempt activity.”<sup>372</sup>

When questioned about the possibility of partnering with an archival institution, co-directors Anula Shetty and Michael Kuetemeyer expressed some hesitation. They explained that the institutionalization of the collection would not reflect the original intention of the Termites.

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<sup>371</sup> For the paper-based records, the collective has used Google Docs as a platform for preservation and access.

<sup>372</sup> Manny Farber, “White Elephant Art Vs. Termite Art,” in *Negative Space: Manny Farber on the Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 135.



As the collective's membership is never static, Shetty and Kuetemeyer are conscious of the way in which the collective's archive is represented and accessed. Platforms like YouTube, for example, were not explored due to the commercial nature of the web portal. There is a sense of responsibility to respect the original intentions of the creators through the way the archive is accessed and preserved. The collective respects these intentions by maintaining an independent archive that reflects the philosophy and history of the organization.<sup>373</sup>

### 7.3 MEDIA ARTS CENTERS AND ARCHIVAL PRACTICE

*What does this mean to a culture that has become increasingly dependent on visual images for its self-image, its view of the world, and its understanding of what is and isn't true? What does this mean if our databanks of images, those public and collective as well as those private and personal, fade into oblivion? I would argue that, without evidence of the past to re-examine and reconsider, we become increasingly vulnerable to the spin doctors of history who reshaped the past to serve other agendas. The entire spectrum of video recordings, from those professionally recorded for cultural institutions like network television, to those made by you and me to memorialize the events of our lives, demands our attention and concern. Were the public to realize just what is at risk if video as a medium is dismissed as ephemeral or someone else's concern, we would have a considerable lobby behind us and this enterprise.*

*-Deidre Boyle, Television and Video Preservation 1997  
New York Public Hearing, March 1996*<sup>374</sup>

The previous chapter framed the media literacy initiatives developed within media arts centers as an attempt to pluralize and democratize the practice of media production: to establish a read/write culture in an otherwise read/only environment. As a theoretical construct, community archives are a similar call for “archivists to give up their recently hard-won mantras of expert

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<sup>373</sup> Anula Shetty and Michael Kuetemeyer, interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

<sup>374</sup> National Film Preservation Board, “Television/Video Preservation Study: New York Public Hearing, March 1996,” <http://www.loc.gov/film/hrng96ny.html>.

[sic], of control, of power, and, instead, to share archiving with communities.”<sup>375</sup> Through the development of their archives, each of the media arts centers in this study have demonstrated how the practice of archives, a traditionally read/only construct bounded by professional practice, can become read/write constructs for community engagement.

The reports from the National Film Preservation Board and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences acknowledge the significance of the media being produced by media arts centers and the independent artists supported by these organizations, but fail to acknowledge the active role these centers have played in the preservation and collection of media. Media arts centers are equated with the garages and attics and other non-archival sites where fugitive media collections may gather to eventually be rescued by archival institutions. The history and development of the media arts centers in this study demonstrates that this is not the case. These organizations are sites of active preservation, though the standards established by these organizations may not meet the standards set by the archival profession. Further, the history of the Media Arts Center Movement and the development of the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) illustrate the dedication of these organizations to preservation research and the development of interventions for the preservation of independent and non-commercial media.

In the quote at the beginning of this section, Deidre Boyle, testifying before the National Film Preservation Board, passionately pleads for the archival field to acknowledge the non-commercial, amateur, and independently produced media in this country. While the 1993 and 1997 reports from the National Film Preservation Board would provoke the nation’s audiovisual

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<sup>375</sup> Terry Cook, “Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms,” *Archival Science* (2012): 19.

archives to refocus their collecting efforts and embrace what became known as the “orphan” film, audiovisual archivists remain committed to preservation as defined by the politics and standards of commercial studios and cultural heritage institutions.<sup>376</sup> In contrast, the interventions developed by the media arts centers in this study mimic the organizations’ production models, matching their values and philosophies. When framed through the lens of professional archival practice, these archives will always be imperfect, but as community archives these practices suggest a critique of professional practice and a redefinition of the practice of preservation.

Media arts centers are not the only organizations to struggle in this archival paradigm. Jennifer Mohan’s 2008 *Environmental Scan of Moving Image Collections in the United States* suggests that non-specialized archives, museums, and libraries also struggle to preserve the audiovisual media in their collections. The institutions surveyed for Mohan’s study cite the lack of technology, expertise, and funding as challenges to the preservation of analog and digital media in their collections.<sup>377</sup> Twenty years ago, NAMAC’s preservation working group reached a similar conclusion:

One of the most serious challenges to any organization with media is a lack of formal training programs, the inadequate number of reference tools on the subject, and the limited number of opportunities for professional skill building. Even the largest organizations, if they house film and video, are facing the same dilemma. Indeed, the largest organizations often have the least amount of hands-on connection to the material. The media arts community, on the other hand, is a resource because of its dedication and intimate involvement in the history of media.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> See Caroline Frick, *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>377</sup> Jen Mohan, *Environmental Scan of Moving Image Collections in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Digital Library Foundation, 2008).

<sup>378</sup> Margaret Byrne, “Conference Report on ‘Preservation,’” *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* (October/November 1994): 11.

Like independent artists, moving image archivists have repurposed the technologies developed for commercial media interests and adapted them to suit their needs. While technology will always be a necessity for archiving audiovisual materials, this study suggests that archivists must also gain a better understanding of how this technology is being used by creators in order to develop archival interventions that acknowledge different modes of production. Media scholar Leo Enticknap suggests that this understanding of the use of technology is a gap in the knowledge of those studying film and media:

The dynamic of the interaction between the creators of the technology, the users of the technology, and the creation of cultural and evidential artefacts using the technology that result from this necessity [mediating technology] is something that critics, theorists and historians of film have struggled to cope with ever since their emergence as a profession.<sup>379</sup>

As Terence Michael Kuetemeyer suggested, “Maybe the solution to the creative problem is not the direction that you think.”<sup>380</sup> As community archives the media arts centers in this study have employed their own standards for preservation and archivization, emphasizing access – access for the organizations’ members and for the communities they serve. Archival standards privilege preservation over access. Further, the standard for preservation has been defined by the filmic object, a standard that is unattainable for media arts centers and for many archives and collecting institutions, as Mohan’s study suggests. As the media industries retool from film to digital formats, this preservation standard will become unsustainable for specialized moving image archives as well. Audiovisual records are similar to digital records in this way, without active intervention and sustainable systems for preservation these records will be lost. This study suggests that in order to create such sustainable models for the preservation of audiovisual

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<sup>379</sup> Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.

<sup>380</sup> Michael K Kuetemeyer, interview with the author, August 8, 2013.

materials, archivists must understand the users and the creators of the records and their values. This is a call for archivists to actively engage with these creators, not to change the way in which these community organizations are archiving their materials, but to learn from the ways in which the communities engage with their records to develop these solutions.

The history and development of media arts centers as explored in this study has suggested that media arts centers have not only played a significant role in the development of the independent film and video-making sector in this country, but have also supported audiovisual archives and preservation community as well. Described as separate and unequal to professional archives, media arts centers have not been fully acknowledge by archival practice or archival historians. Though preservation is just one of the many concerns of media arts centers, the development of archives, as demonstrated by the cases here, has been a primary function for these organizations. While a small number of media arts centers, such as the Film and Video Department at the Museum of Modern Art, have been recognized as practicing audiovisual archives, all media arts centers have supported the audiovisual preservation movement through their localized efforts to preserve, create, and provide access to their archival collections, establishing an underground network of community audiovisual archives (to borrow the rhetoric of the independent film movement of the 1960s).

The practices developed here suggest a new approach to the preservation and management of audiovisual materials, not only for audiovisual archives, but for all archival institutions with a concern for the preservation of these technologically dependent records. Appraisal is grounded not in the rarity of the material or its aesthetic significance, but in the informational content of the records and its evidential value. Preservation of the informational value is privileged over the aesthetic value of audiovisual materials, suggesting that less

technologically involved methods of migration are more appropriate for the preservation of audiovisual media over resource heavy preservation interventions that preserve records on the original (often obsolete) media. Due to the highly technological nature of these materials, providing access is not enough; media arts centers emphasize the need for outreach initiatives that address the specific technological and visual literacies necessary to fully engage with audiovisual records. Further, as community archives media arts centers suggests an open, dynamic, and pluralistic structure for archives through establishing archives and archival practices that respect the values and philosophies of the community of records creators. Framing media arts centers as archival laboratories, as alternative archival spaces, opens possibilities for new models for the preservation and archivization of audiovisual media, not only for media arts centers, but for all organizations and institutions preserving these materials.

## **7.4 FUTURE RESEARCH**

This initial exploration of media arts centers has uncovered more questions than answers. Future research in this area has implications not only for media scholars and audiovisual archivists, but for archivists and scholars working with text-based materials as well.

### **7.4.1 A History of the Media Arts Center Movement**

The history of the Media Arts Center Movement and the development of the National Alliance of Media Arts and Culture warrant further study. Those interviewed for this project confirmed that a history of this movement has yet to be fully explored. A number of respondents

suggested that much of this history has not been documented, and is instead part of the memories of those who were active in the movement. Many of those described as the “first generation” of media arts advocates and organizers are aging and passing-away taking their memories with them. This latent memory may only be captured through oral history. As the cases in this study have demonstrated, members of these organizations are willing and eager to share their histories, which suggests interest in this project. NAMAC and perhaps AMIA (the Association of Moving Image Archivists) are two organizations that may be able to assist in coordinating such a project. This historical project also requires further archival research in media arts centers still in operation and in archives that may hold the collections of now defunct organizations.

While not explored in this study, further analysis of the membership data printed in NAMAC’s publications could begin to identify persons and organizations of interest for a larger historical study. This data could also lead to a larger Social Network Analysis of the Media Arts Movement to better understand the links between individuals and organizations active in the movement.

Also of interest in this area is the data from NAMAC’s *Travel Sheet*. While I could not gain access to this publication for this research study, executive director Jack Walsh described this precursor to *Media Arts* and *MAIN: Media Arts Information Network* as a newsletter that announced upcoming appearances in media arts centers across the country. The Carnegie Museum of Art is also known to have produced a similar publication. The NAMAC *Travel Sheet* and other similar publications could be pulled into a larger dataset and used to track the movement of independent artists, again connecting organizations and individuals active in the media arts movement and media production in the United States.

Further study in these areas would be of particular interest to those studying the development of independent and non-commercial media production in the United States as well as those studying social movements and independent and community media.

#### **7.4.2 Audiovisual Archives and Union Catalogs**

A history of media arts centers would also be of particular interest to audiovisual archivists. As this study demonstrates, media arts centers were active participants in the development of audiovisual preservation research in the United States. This intersection between the history of audiovisual preservation in the United States and the involvement of media arts centers and the media arts community also warrants further interrogation. The media arts center movement included established archival institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, Anthology Film Archives, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, yet their role in this “makers” movement has not been explored. Similarly, the efforts of non-archival media arts centers have not been acknowledged in the audiovisual archives literature. Further interrogation at this intersection could contribute to a more complete understanding of the development of the orphan film movement as well as the efforts to collect and archive non-commercial media in this country.

The development of a union catalog was another unexplored, but reoccurring theme in the data from NAMAC. The National Moving Image Database (NAMID), the first attempt at an expansive and inclusive catalog of audiovisual materials being preserved in the United States, was initiated in the early 1990s. NAMID was followed by MIC (Moving Image Collections) in the 2000s, but both union catalogs of moving image media have been abandoned. Further exploration of these projects as well as the involvement of media arts centers and affiliated



organizations, such as IMAP (Independent Media Arts Preservation) and the Media Alliance, may help to elucidate the reasons for the initial success and ultimate failure of these projects.

### 7.4.3 Archival Theory and Digital Preservation

This study and future research in this area has implications for other realms of archival practice as well, particularly in the areas of digital preservation and curation. Christopher Lee and Helen Tibbo suggested that “in order for digital collections to be sustainable over time, the actors responsible for the archives must continuously have appropriate expertise, resources, and a political/institutional mandate to carry out the work required.”<sup>381</sup> Elisabeth Yakel has further suggested that digital curation requires “the active involvement of information professionals in the management, including the preservation of digital data for future use.”<sup>382</sup> While these understandings of digital preservation and curation suggest the need for the active management of digital records, this active management of digital materials suggests a need to work with records creators as well.

Due to the technological dependence of audiovisual records (both analog and digital), audiovisual preservation at times closely resembles digital preservation. The practices of reformatting and restoration in the audiovisual archives field map closely to the practices of migration and emulation.<sup>383</sup> As this study has demonstrated, audiovisual materials, like digital materials, require active management if they are to persist into the future. The archival

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<sup>381</sup> Christopher A. Lee and Helen Tibbo, “Where’s the Archivist in Digital Curation? Exploring the Possibilities through a Matrix of Knowledge and Skills,” *Archivaria* 72 (Fall 2011): 127.

<sup>382</sup> As cited in Lee and Tibbo, “Where’s the Archivist in Digital Curation?,” 124.

<sup>383</sup> These similarities have been explored in, Lindsay Kistler Mattock, “From Film Restoration to Digital Emulation: The Archival Code of Ethics in the Age of Digital Reproduction,” *Journal of Information Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2010): 74-85.

management of these records requires an intimate knowledge of the technologies used to create and preserve these records. But, as this study has demonstrated, to successfully archive these materials in all contexts, an understanding of the records creators and the social constructs of records creation is required as well.

Audiovisual archives are positioned between the analog and digital. The standard on which audiovisual archival practice has been established, moving image film, is on the verge of becoming obsolete.<sup>384</sup> This is a standard that the media arts centers in this study have abandoned as they have explore new methods for archiving and preserving media. While these practices suggest new models for audiovisual archives, continued study in this area may help to inform other areas of archival theory and practice, established on text-based models, through the transition to born digital archives.

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<sup>384</sup> The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences cited the retooling of the industry to digital video as the impetus for the *Digital Dilemma* reports.

## APPENDIX A

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions have been adapted from Jennifer Mohan's *Environmental Scan of Moving Image Collections in the United States*. Mohan's study sought to determine the preparedness of collecting institutions (archives, museums, and libraries) to digitize their moving image collections.<sup>385</sup> This series of questions addresses the content of collections, preservation concerns, and collecting practices, within media arts centers, as well as the relationship that these organizations may have with other collecting institutions. These questions served as the foundation for semi-structured interviews with the respondents at each of the sites selected for this study.

#### About the organizations

1. What is the primary mission of your organization?
2. How would you describe the key activities of your organization?
3. Does the organization receive funding?
  - From what sources?
  - For what activities?
  - At what levels?
4. Who does the organization serve?

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<sup>385</sup> Jennifer Mohan, *Environmental Scan of Moving Image Collections* (Washington, D.C.: Digital Library Foundation, 2008).

5. Would you describe your organization as a media arts center?

- What does this term mean to you?

### **About collections**

1. What types of media formats do you have in your collection?

2. In your estimation, how many individual pieces of moving images do you have?

3. What kinds of genres (documentary, fiction, etc.) are included in your collections?

4. Do you currently receive preservation funding for the organization? If so, from what sources?

5. Do you have any new projects in development for your collections?

6. Is your collection open for use by media creators or researchers?

- What is the most frequently used portion of our moving image collection in terms of requests from media creators, researchers, and students?

7. What issues hamper access to your moving image collections the most?

- Other access issues?

8. Do you have media that plays on equipment that is obsolete or is in danger of becoming so?

- Who maintains the equipment?

9. How much of your moving image collection would you feel confident about having clear and complete copyright information?

10. How much of your moving image collection would you estimate has no copyright information?

11. Have you been contacted by a private company or organization related to deals to digitize your content in order to provide digital distribution?

- Is this something you would consider?
- Would there be any issues that you would consider deal breakers? For example, giving up control of aspects of the collection, not being able to share digital copies with other institutions, etc.

12. How does collecting fit the mission of your organization?

### **About physical preservation**

1. How would you describe the word preservation?
  - How long has your organization been involved in preservation activities?
  - What activities would you describe as part of the preservation efforts at your organization?
2. Have you ever conducted a preservation assessment for your moving image collections?  
If so, when?
3. What is the biggest preservation concern for your collections?
4. What is the biggest preservation cost for your moving image collections?
5. Based on your preservation efforts, how would you describe the condition of your moving image collections? Are some collections in better condition than others?
6. Who performs preservation or conservation work on your collections?
7. Has your organization adopted standards for digital copies?
  - If so, what formats are you using for the digital copies?
  - Do you provide access online?

### **About collecting practices**

1. What is your policy for collecting media produced within the organization?
2. Do you actively collect from outside the organization?

3. Do filmmakers/creators retain the rights to the materials they donate?

### **About representation**

1. Have you cataloged your holdings?
  - If so, have you adopted a cataloging standard?
2. Do you share your catalog with other institutions? Has it been published outside of your institution?
3. How complete are the catalog records for the moving images in your collections? Do you feel your records have sufficient information regarding the author/creator, date, title, copyright, credits, etc.?
4. Do you provide access to materials online?
  - If so, do the creators dictate the way in which their items are represented online?
  - Do you retain rights to these materials?

### **About relationships with archives**

1. Would you describe your organization as an archive?
2. Have you been approached by collecting institutions (museums, archives, libraries) about your collections?
  - Would you consider partnering with one of these institutions?

### **About outreach**

1. What types of educational opportunities do you offer?
  - Workshops? Classes?
  - What technology/media do you teach?
2. Who is the primary audience for these classes/workshops?
3. Do you have media literacy initiative?

4. Where are classes primarily offered?
  - Do you offer opportunities outside of the organization?
5. How have your offerings changed over the past 10 years?
  - How do you see them changing in the future?
6. What requests have you had for new/different offerings?

## APPENDIX B

### MOHONK CONFERENCE ATTENDEES<sup>386</sup>

Chloe Aaron, Public Media Program, National Endowment for the Arts

Tino Ballio, Wisconsin Center for Theater, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisc.

James Blue, Media Center, Rice University, Houston, Texas

Eileen Bowser, Film Department, Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y.

Hiram Garcia Borja, Director General de Cinematográfica Jefatura Asunto: Cineteca National  
Secretaria de Gobernación, Mexico, D.F.

Peter Bradley, New York State Council on the Arts, New York, N.Y.

Dr. Edgar Breitenbach, Prints and Photos Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Camille Cook, Film Center, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

Forrest Chisman, Markle Foundation, New York, N.Y.

Sally Dixon, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Diana Dreiman, Film and T.V. Studies Center, Los Angeles, Ca.

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<sup>386</sup> As published in, Peter Feinstein, ed., *The Independent Film Community* (New York: Committee on Film and Television Resources and Services, 1977).



Raymond Fielding, School of Communications and Theater, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa.

Peter Feinstein, University Film Study Center, Cambridge, Ma.

John Ford, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, Mo.

Virgil Grillo, University Film Committee, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado

Audley Grossman, Jr., Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Mich.

Denise Jacobson, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Or.

Sam Kula, Archivist, American Film Institute, Washington, D.C.

Peggy Loar, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Ind.

Cameron McCauley, Extension Media Center, University of California, Berkeley, Ca.

Jonas Mekas, Anthology Film Archives, New York, N.Y.

Gerald O'Grady, State University of New York, Buffalo, N.Y.

Nancy Raines, Public Media Program, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Sheldon Renan, Pacific Film Archives, University Art Museum, Berkeley, Ca.

Ron Sutton, National Association of Media Educators, Washington, D.C.

Dean Swanson, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minn.

Willard Van Dyke, Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y.

Barbara Van Dyke (Conference Director), International Film Seminars, New York, N. Y.

## APPENDIX C

### NAMAC MEMBERS 1983-1989

Aggregated from membership lists printed in *Media Arts* 1, no. 1 (June/July 1983) through *Media Arts* 2, no. 4 (Spring/Summer 1989).

*221 Organizations, 92 Cities, 35 States, 2 U.S. Territories, and 2 Countries*

#### **Alabama**

Alabama Film-Makers Co-Op, Huntsville, AL

#### **Arizona**

Arizona Center for the Media Arts, Tucson, AZ

Arizona Media Arts Center, Tucson, AZ

Community Design Resource Center, Tucson, AZ

#### **Canada**

Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center, Vancouver, BC

V Tapes, Toronto, ON

Cinematheque Quebecoise, Montreal, PQ

## **California**

Educational Film & Video Project, Berkeley, CA

Jewish Film Festival, Berkeley, CA

Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA

Baseline, Beverly Hills, CA

University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA

Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA

Encounter Cinema, Los Angeles, CA

Filmforum, Los Angeles, CA

Gay & Lesbian Media Coalition, Los Angeles, CA

Hispanic Film/Video Institute, Los Angeles, CA

Independent Feature Project / West, Los Angeles, CA

International Documentary Association, Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles Educational Partnership Humanitas, Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles International Film Exposition, Los Angeles, CA

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences / Academy Foundation, Los Angeles, CA

The American Cinematheque, Los Angeles, CA

UCLA Film/Radio/Television Archives, Los Angeles, CA

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

Visual Communications, Los Angeles, CA

The Media Tree, Mill Valley, CA

National Educational Film and Video Festival / Learning Resource Center, Oakland, CA

Pasadena Film Forum, Pasadena, CA

Bay Area Video Coalition, San Francisco, CA

Brooklyn Museum Department of Public Programs and Media, San Francisco, CA

Canyon Cinema, San Francisco, CA

Cine Action, San Francisco, CA

Film Arts Foundation, San Francisco, CA

Foundation for Art in Cinema San Francisco, CA

Frameline, San Francisco, CA

National Asian American Telecommunications Association, San Francisco, CA

New American Makers, San Francisco, CA

San Francisco Cinematheque / Foundation for Art in Cinema, San Francisco, CA

San Francisco Video Festival, San Francisco, CA

Video Free America, San Francisco, CA

Santa Barbara International Film Festival, Santa Barbara, CA

## **Colorado**

Rocky Mountain Center for Cinema and Television Arts, Aspen, CO

Rocky Mountain Film Center, Boulder, CO

## **Connecticut**

Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT

## **Washington, DC**

American Film Institute, Washington, DC

Auditorium Programs/Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

Black Film Institute, Washington, DC

National Association of Artists' Organizations, Washington, DC

National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, Washington, DC

Positive Productions, Washington, DC

The American Film Institute, Washington, DC

The Learning Channel, Washington, DC

TresAmericas, Washington, DC

Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC

WETA-TV, Washington, DC

Women in Film, Inc., Washington, DC

## **Florida**

Alliance for Media Arts, Miami , FL

Jones Intercable Public Access Center, Tampa, FL

Tampa Educational Cable Consortium, Tampa, FL

## **Georgia**

IMAGE - Independent Media Artists of Georgia, Atlanta, GA

## **Hawaii**

Honolulu Academy of Art, Honolulu, HI

Pacific Media Arts Center, Kaneohe, HI

## **Idaho**

Idaho commission on the Arts, Boise, ID

## **Illinois**

University Film and Video Association, Carbondale, IL

Art Institute of Chicago Film Center, Chicago, IL  
Center for New Television, Chicago, IL  
Chicago Filmmakers, Chicago, IL  
Community Film Workshop of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
Community TV Network Neighborhood Program, Chicago, IL  
Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
The Film Center/School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
Video Data Bank, Chicago, IL  
Women in the Director's Chair, Chicago, IL  
Coronet-MTI Film and Video, Deerfield, IL  
American Film and Video Association, La Grange Park, IL

### **Indiana**

Black Film Center Archive, Bloomington, IN  
Indiana University Libraries, Bloomington, IN

### **Kentucky**

Water Tower Art Association, Louisville, KY  
Appalshop, Inc., Whitesburg, KY

### **Louisiana**

Center for New American Media, New Orleans, LA  
Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA  
New Orleans Video Access Center, New Orleans, LA

### **Massachusetts**

Boston Film/Video Foundation, Boston, MA

Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston, MA  
Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston, MA  
Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, MA  
Center Screen, Inc., Cambridge, MA  
Central Studios, Cambridge, MA  
New England Foundation for the Arts, Cambridge, MA  
Merrimack Films, Lowell, MA  
International Center for 8mm Film and Video, Somerville, MA  
Newton Television Foundation, Waban, MA

## **Maryland**

Baltimore Film Forum, Baltimore, MD

## **Maine**

Northeast Historic Film, Blue Hill Falls, ME  
Maine Alliance of Media Artists, Portland, ME

## **Minnesota**

Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts / Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis,  
MN  
The Minnesota Film Center / University Film Society, Minneapolis, MN  
UCVideo, Minneapolis, MN  
University Community Video, Minneapolis, MN  
University Film Society / Minneapolis Film Center, Minneapolis, MN  
Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN  
Film in the Cities, St. Paul, MN

Minnesota State Arts Board, St. Paul, MN

## **Missouri**

City Movie Center, Kansas City, MO

Legacy Productions, Saint Louis, MO

Double Helix Corporation, St. Louis, MO

## **Montana**

Helena Film Society, Helena, MT

## **Nebraska**

Sheldon Film Theater / University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NB

## **New Jersey**

Union County College Media Center, Canford, NJ

Mediamix of New Brunswick, New Brunswick, NJ

Newark Mediaworks, Newark, NJ

Black Maria Film/Video Festival, West Orange, NJ

## **New Mexico**

One West Media, Santa Fe, NM

Rising Sun Media Arts Center, Santa Fe, NM

## **New York**

University Wide Programs in the Arts / SUNY, Albany, NY

Intermedia Arts Center, Bayville, NY

185 Nassau Street Corp., Brooklyn, NY

Media Study / Buffalo, Buffalo, NY

Squeaky Wheel, Buffalo, NY



New Community Cinema, Huntington, NY

Film Workshop of Westchester, Irvington on Hudson, NY

Cornell Cinema, Ithaca, NY

American Federation of Arts, New York, NY

Angle Intermedia, New York, NY

Anthology Film Archives / Film Art Fund, New York, NY

Asian Cinevision, New York, NY

Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers / Foundation for Independent Video and  
Film, New York, NY

Astoria Motion Picture and Television Foundation, New York, NY

Black Filmmakers Foundation, New York, NY

Chamba Educational Film Services, New York, NY

Collective for Living Cinema, New York, NY

Educational Film Library Association, New York, NY

Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater, New York, NY

Film/Video Arts, New York, NY

Film Forum / The Moving Image, New York, NY

Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York, NY

Film-Makers Cooperative / New American Cinema Group, New York, NY

First Run Features, New York, NY

Global Village, New York, NY

Hispanic Information and Telecommunications Network, New York, NY

Independent Cinema Artists and Producers, New York, NY

Independent Feature Project, New York, NY

Media Alliance, New York, NY

Media Arts Institute, New York, NY

Media Arts Program / Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, New York, NY

Media Center for Children, New York, NY

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

Millennium Film Workshop, New York, NY

Museum of Broadcasting, New York, NY

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Museum of the American Indian Film & Video Center, New York, NY

National Film Board of Canada, New York, NY

New Medium, New York, NY

New York Foundation for the Arts, New York, NY

New York Public Library, New York, NY

Parabola Arts Foundation, New York, NY

Raindance Foundation, New York, NY

Television Laboratory at WNET , New York, NY

The American Federation of Arts, New York, NY

The American Museum of the Moving Image, New York, NY

The Film Fund, New York, NY

The Kitchen, New York, NY

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

Women Make Movies, New York, NY

Women's Interart Center, New York, NY

Worldwide Producers Network, New York, NY

Young Filmmakers/Video Arts, New York, NY

International Museum of Photography / George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY

Island Cinema Resources, Staten Island, NY

Staten Island Community Television, Staten Island, NY

Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences, Staten Island, NY

Light, Audio, Media Programs / Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

## **Ohio**

Athens Center for Film and Video, Athens, OH

Ohio Valley Regional Media Arts Coalition, Athens, OH

Cincinnati Artists Group Effort, Cincinnati, OH

Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH

Cincinnati Film Society, Cincinnati, OH

Center for Human Services, Cleveland, OH

Columbus Association for Performing Arts, Columbus, OH

Columbus Community Cable Access / ACTV, Columbus, OH

Community Film Association, Columbus, OH

Ohio State Arts Council, Columbus, OH

Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

Wexner Center for the Visual Arts / University Gallery, Columbus, OH

Toledo Media Project/University of Toledo, Toledo, OH

**Oklahoma**

University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

Magic Empire Media Arts Center, Tulsa, OK

**Oregon**

Northwest Film & Video Center, Portland, OR

Northwest Media Project, Portland, OR

The Media Project, Portland, OR

**Pennsylvania**

Earmark, Philadelphia, PA

Neighborhood Film/Video Project, Philadelphia, PA

New Liberty Productions, Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia College of Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Carnegie Institute Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA

Pittsburgh Film-Makers, Inc., Pittsburgh, PA

Berks Filmmakers, Inc., Reading, PA

**Puerto Rico**

Sistema De Bibliotecas, San Juan, PR

**South Carolina**

Media Arts Center / South Carolina Arts Commission, Columbia, SC

South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, Columbia, SC

**Tennessee**

Sinking Creek Film Celebration, Greenville, TN

**Texas**

Austin Community Television, Austin, TX

Austin Media Arts, Austin, TX

Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX

Southwest Alternate Media Project, Houston, TX

Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, San Antonio, TX

San Antonio Media Center, San Antonio, TX

**Utah**

Sundance Institute, Salt Lake City, UT

Utah Media Center, Salt Lake City, UT

**Virginia**

Washington Area Film and Video League, Fairfax, VA

**Virgin Islands**

Caribbean Center for Understanding Media, St. Croix, Virgin Is.

**Washington**

Olympia Media Exchange, Olympia, WA

911 Contemporary Arts and Resource Center, Seattle, WA

Focal Point Media Center, Seattle, WA

Seattle Association for Media Artists, Seattle, WA

**Wisconsin**

Great Lakes Film and Video, Milwaukee, WI

**West Virginia**

West Virginia Filmmakers Guild, Charleston, WV

## **APPENDIX D**

### **PAPER TIGER TELEVISION VIDEO PRESERVATION PROJECT<sup>387</sup>**

#### **D.1 THE ARCHIVAL PROJECT PRESENTS: TAPE PRESERVATION A HOW TO LIST ON DOCUMENTATION**

1. **CHOOSE A TAPE TO WATCH.** Record the Title, Number. Format. Year. Notes on Tape.
2. **EVALUATE THE PHYSICAL.** Make sure the tape has no visual exterior or interior damage. The tape should be wound tightly, make sure there is no deterioration of the layers of the tape. Inspect the tape heads and other moving parts of the tape to make sure there is no dust or deposited material. If damage on the tape appears to be severe don't take the risk of playing the tape. It could exacerbate the problem. If the tape is dusty or has deposited material in it, notate it and then put it back on the shelf. That is for a professional to deal with.
3. **PUT THE TAPE IN THE ¾ DECK PLAYER.** Press the rewind button and make sure it is fully rewound. Press the reset button so the play reads 00:00. Press play and begin to notate any visual or audio glitches that occur and the approximate time they begin. Refer to the Video Glitch Glossary for correct terms.
4. **LABEL THE TAPE.** Using the pre-made labels write down the date and the condition of that tape. Place the label on the outside of the box and hand in the evaluation form in the appropriate place.
5. **REPEAT AND REPEAT.** Repeat this process for as long as you want.

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<sup>387</sup> Reproduced from, PTTV Video Archiving Project, n.d.; Paper Tiger Television Archive; MSS 276; box 4; folder 55; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries.



Record any visual/audio glitches you observe: (see video glitch diary)

### D.3 VIDEO GLITCH GLOSSARY

**When using the glossary, use the *technical term* when you are sure that is what is happening in the tape and the *actual description* when you are unsure.**

**\*\*Remember some of the “problems” on the tape can be artistically intended or could have occurred during recording... use your best judgment\*\***

| What you see/here<br>(Actual Description) | More Description | Technical Term   | Possible Causes |
|---|------------------|--|-----------------|
| Washed out color                          | Produces pastels | Low chroma level<br>Chroma (def): a<br>single color detail |                 |
| Heavy, saturated color                    |                  | High chroma level  |                 |



|   |   |                  |  |
|---|---|------------------|--|
| White spots (white static)                                    | Appears over image sporadically                         | Snow             | Creases in the tape, interfering signal, loss of magnetic particles, random noise                                      |
| Highly saturated reds   | Colors appear to be moving on the screen                | Chroma noise     |  |
| Brief signal loss, black screen<br><br>*Frequent signal loss* |   | Drop out         | Tape head clog, defect in tape, debris, missing magnetic material<br><br>*Machine or tape is contaminated with debris* |
| Narrow horizontal black bar                                   | Moves vertically  | Glitch           |  |
| A strand of tape protruding from a wound tape pack            |   | Popped Strand    |  |
| Video screen moves upward or downward                         | A lack of vertical synchronization                      | Roll             |  |
| Bending at top or bottom of screen                            | A result of poor tension regulation by the video player | Skew             | Change of video track angles   |
| A Squeal  | Sounds like a squeal                                    |                  | Build-up of debris on a guide or a head, poor lubrication on tape due to age   |
| Picture breaks up/ loss of video                              | Video loss may occur only in segments                   | Loss of Tracking |  |
| Audio not working/ no sound                                   |   | Audio dropout    |  |

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